

The life and letters of Walter H. Page.  
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*Walter H. Page*

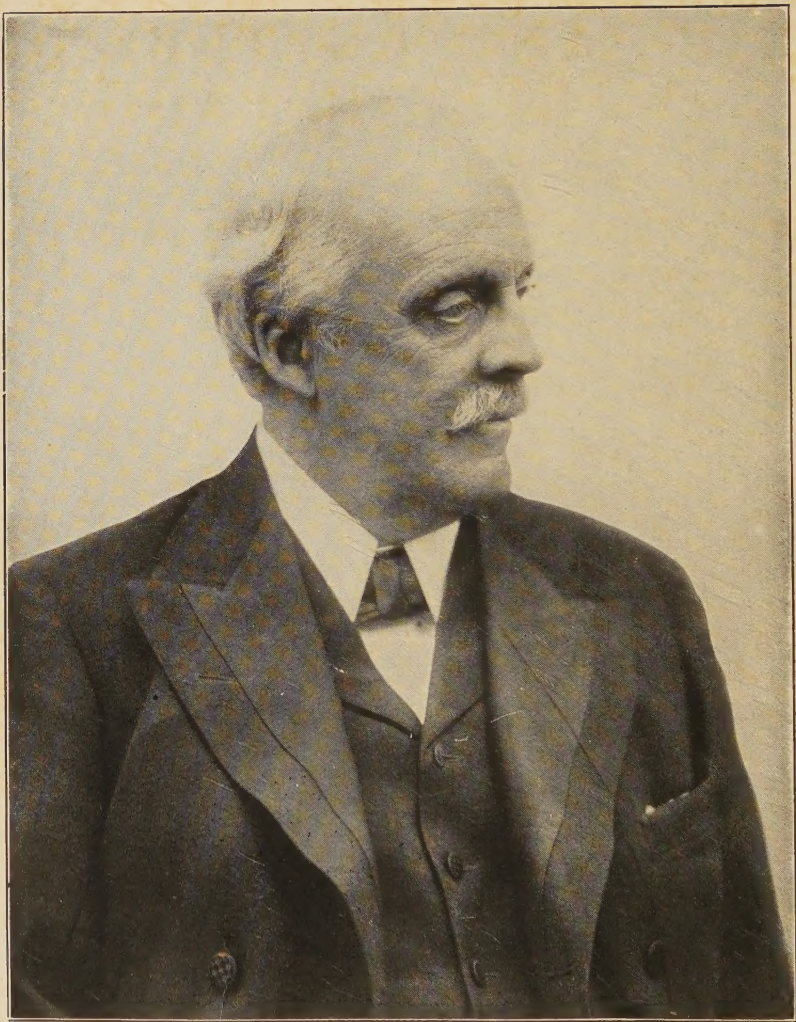




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The Rt. Hon. Arthur James Balfour (now the Earl of Balfour)  
Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1916–1919



THE  
LIFE AND LETTERS OF  
WALTER H. PAGE

BY  
BURTON J. HENDRICK



VOLUME II  
PART II



GARDEN CITY      NEW YORK  
DOUBLEDAY, PAGE & COMPANY  
1924

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THE COUNTRY LIFE PRESS, GARDEN CITY, N. Y.



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# CONTENTS

## VOLUME II

### PART II

| CHAPTER                                                  | PAGE |
|----------------------------------------------------------|------|
| XXI. THE UNITED STATES AT WAR . . .                      | 215  |
| XXII. THE BALFOUR MISSION TO THE UNITED STATES . . . . . | 248  |
| XXIII. PAGE—THE MAN . . . . .                            | 295  |
| XXIV. A RESPITE AT ST. IVES . . . . .                    | 321  |
| XXV. GETTING THE AMERICAN TROOPS TO FRANCE . . . . .     | 349  |
| XXVI. LAST DAYS IN ENGLAND . . . . .                     | 374  |
| XXVII. THE END . . . . .                                 | 404  |
| APPENDIX . . . . .                                       | 407  |
| INDEX . . . . .                                          | 425  |



THE  
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OF  
WALTER H. PAGE





## CHAPTER XXI

### THE UNITED STATES AT WAR

#### I

**T**HE United States broke off diplomatic relations with Germany on February 3, 1917. The occasion was a memorable one in the American Embassy in London, not unrelieved by a touch of the ridiculous. All day long a nervous and rather weary company had waited in the Ambassador's room for the decisive word from Washington. Mr. and Mrs. Page, Mr. and Mrs. Laughlin, Mr. Shoecraft, the Ambassador's secretary, sat there hour after hour, hardly speaking to one another in their tense excitement, waiting for the news that would inform them that Bernstorff's course had been run and that their country had taken its decision on the side of the Allies. Finally, at nine o'clock in the evening, the front door bell rang. Mr. Shoecraft excitedly left the room; half way downstairs he met Admiral William Reginald Hall, the head of the British Naval Intelligence, who was hurrying up to the Ambassador. Admiral Hall, as he spied Mr. Shoecraft, stopped abruptly and uttered just two words:

"Thank God!"

He then went into the Ambassador's room and read a secret code message which he had just received from Captain Gaunt, the British naval attaché at Washington. It was as follows:

"Bernstorff has just been given his pass and shall probably get drunk to-night!"

It was in this way that Page first learned that the long tension had passed.

Page well understood that the dismissal of Bernstorff at that time meant war with the Central Empires. Had this dismissal taken place in 1915, after the sinking of the *Lusitania*, or in 1916, after the sinking of the *Sussex*, Page believed that a simple break in relations would in itself have brought the war to an early end. But by February, 1917, things had gone too far. For Germany had now decided to stake everything upon the chance of winning a quick victory with the submarine. Our policy had persuaded the Kaiser's advisers that America would not intervene; and the likelihood of rapidly starving Great Britain was so great—indeed the Germans had reduced the situation to a mathematical calculation of success—that an American declaration of war seemed to Berlin to be a matter of no particular importance. The American Ambassador in London regarded Bernstorff's dismissal much more seriously. It justified the interpretations of events which he had been sending to Mr. Wilson, Colonel House, and others for nearly three years. If Page had been inclined to take satisfaction in the fulfilment of his own prophecies, Germany's disregard of her promises and the American declaration of war would have seemed an ample justification of his course as ambassador.

But Page had little time for such vain communings. "All that water," as he now wrote, "has flowed over the dam." Occasionally his mind would revert to the dreadful period of "neutrality," but in the main his activities, mental and physical, were devoted to the future. A letter addressed to his son Arthur shows how quickly and how sympathetically he was adjusting himself to the new prospect. His mind was now occupied with ships, food, armies, warfare on submarines, and the approaching



resettlement of the world. How completely he foresaw the part that the United States must play in the actual waging of hostilities, and to what an extent he himself was responsible for the policies that ultimately prevailed, appears in this letter:

*To Arthur W. Page*

25 March, 1917, London.

DEAR ARTHUR:

It's very hard, not to say impossible, to write in these swiftly moving days. Anything written to-day is out of date to-morrow—even if it be not wrong to start with. The impression becomes stronger here every day that we shall go into the war "with both feet"—that the people have pushed the President over in spite of his vision of the Great Peacemaker, and that, being pushed over, his idea now will be to show how he led them into a glorious war in defense of democracy. That's my reading of the situation, and I hope I am not wrong. At any rate, ever since the call of Congress for April 2nd, I have been telegraphing tons of information and plans that can be of use only if we go to war. Habitually they never acknowledge the receipt of anything at Washington. I don't know, therefore, whether they like these pieces of information or not. I have my staff of twenty-five good men getting all sorts of warlike information; and I have just organized twenty-five or thirty more—the best business Americans in London—who are also at work. I am trying to get the Government at Washington to send over a committee of conference—a General, an Admiral, a Reserve Board man, etc., etc. If they do half the things that I recommend we'll be in at the final lickin' big, and will save our souls yet.

There's lots of human nature in this world. A note is

now sometimes heard here in undertone (Northcliffe strikes it)—that they don't want the Americans in the war. This means that if we come in just as the Allies finish the job we'll get credit, in part, for the victory, which we did little to win! But that's a minor note. The great mass of people do want us in, quick, hard, and strong—our money and our guns and our ships.

A gift of a billion dollars<sup>1</sup> to France will fix Franco-American history all right for several centuries. Push it through. Such a gift could come to this Kingdom also but for the British stupidity about the Irish for three hundred years. A big loan to Great Britain at a low rate of interest will do the work here.

My mind keeps constantly on the effect of the war and especially of our action on our own country. Of course that is the most important end of the thing for us. I hope that—

1. It will break up and tear away our isolation;
2. It will unhorse our cranks and soft-brains.
3. It will make us less promiscuously hospitable to every kind of immigrant;
4. It will reëstablish in our minds and conscience and policy our true historic genesis, background, kindred, and destiny—i. e., kill the Irish and the German influence.
5. It will revive our real manhood—put the molly-coddles in disgrace, as idiots and dandies are;
6. It will make our politics frank and manly by restoring our true nationality;
7. It will make us again a great sea-faring people. It is this that has given Great Britain its long lead in the world;
8. Break up our feminized education—make a boy a

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<sup>1</sup>At this time the proposal of such a gift found much popular favour. However, the plan was not carried through.

vigorous animal and make our education rest on a wholesome physical basis;

9. Bring men of a higher type into our political life.

We need waking up and shaking up and invigorating as much as the Germans need taking down.

There is no danger of "militarism" in any harmful sense among any English race or in any democracy.

By George! all these things open an interesting outlook and series of tasks—don't they?

My staff and I are asking everybody what the Americans can best do to help the cause along. The views are not startling, but they are interesting.

*Jellicoe:* More ships, merchant ships, any kind of ships, and take over the patrol of the American side of the Atlantic and release the British cruisers there.

*Balfour:* American credits in the United States big enough to keep up the rate of exchange.

*Bonar Law:* Same thing.

*The military men:* An expeditionary force, no matter how small, for the effect of the American Flag in Europe. If one regiment marched through London and Paris and took the Flag to the front, that would be worth the winning of a battle.

Think of the vast increase of territory and power Great Britain will have—her colonies drawn closer than ever, the German colonies, or most of them, taken over by her, Bagdad hers—what a way Germany chose to lessen the British Empire! And these gains of territory will be made, as most of her gains have been, not by any prearranged, set plan, but as by-products of action for some other purpose. The only people who have made a deliberate plan to conquer the earth—now living—are the Germans. And from first to last the additions to the British Empire have been made because she has been a first-class maritime power.

And that's the way she has made her trade and her money, too.

On top of this the President speculates about the danger of the white man losing his supremacy because a few million men get killed! The truth is every country that is playing a big part in the war was overpopulated. There will be a considerable productive loss because the killed men were, as a rule, the best men; but the white man's control of the world hasn't depended on any few million of males. This speculation is far up in the clouds. If Russia and Germany really be liberated from social and political and industrial autocracy, this liberation will bring into play far more power than all the men killed in the war could have had under the pre-war régime. I observe this with every year of my observation—there's no substitute for common-sense.

The big results of the war will, after all, be the freedom and the stimulation of men in these weary Old-World lands—in Russia, Germany itself, and in England. In five or ten years (or sooner, alas!) the dead will be forgotten.

If you wish to make a picture of the world as it will be when the war ends, you must conjure up such scenes as these—human bones along the Russian highways where the great retreat took place and all that such a sight denotes; Poland literally starved; Serbia, blasted and burned and starved; Armenia butchered; the horrible tragedy of Gallipoli, where the best soldiers in the world were sacrificed to politicians' policies; Austria and Germany starved and whipped but liberalized—perhaps no king in either country; Belgium—belgiumized; northern France the same and worse; more productive Frenchmen killed in proportion to the population perhaps than any other country will have lost; Great Britain—most of her best men gone or maimed; colossal debts; several Teutonic countries bank-



rupt; every atrocity conceivable committed somewhere—a hell-swept great continent having endured more suffering in three years than in the preceding three hundred. Then, ten years later, most of this suffering a mere memory; governments reorganized and liberalized; men made more efficient by this strenuous three years' work; the fields got back their bloom, and life going on much as it did before—with this chief difference—some kings have gone and many privileges have been abolished. The lessons are two—(1) that no government can successfully set out and conquer the world; and (2) that the hold that privilege holders acquire costs more to dislodge than any one could ever have guessed. That's the sum of it. Kings and privilege mongers, of course, have held the parts of the world separate from one another. They fatten on provincialism, which is mistaken for patriotism. As they lose their grip, human sympathy has its natural play between nations, and civilization has a chance. With any Emperor of Germany left the war will have been half in vain.

If we (the U. S. A.) cultivate the manly qualities and throw off our cranks and read our own history and be true to our traditions and blood and get some political vigour; then if we emancipate ourselves from the isolation theory and from the landlubber theory—get into the world and build ships, ships, ships, ships, and run them to the ends of the seas, we can dominate the world in trade and in political thought.

You know I have moments when it occurs to me that perhaps I'd better give whatever working years I may have to telling this story—the story of the larger meaning of the war. There's no bigger theme—never was one so big.

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

On April 1st, the day before President Wilson made his great address before Congress requesting that body to declare the existence of a state of war with Germany, Page committed to paper a few paragraphs which summed up his final judgment of President Wilson's foreign policy for the preceding two and a half years.

Embassy of the United States of America,  
April 1, 1917.

In these last days, before the United States is forced into war—by the people's insistence—the preceding course of events becomes even clearer than it was before; and it has been as clear all the time as the nose on a man's face.

The President began by refusing to understand the meaning of the war. To him it seemed a quarrel to settle economic rivalries between Germany and England. He said to me last September<sup>1</sup> that there were many causes why Germany went to war. He showed a great degree of toleration for Germany; and he was, during the whole morning that I talked with him, complaining of England. The controversies we had with England were, of course, mere by-products of the conflict. But to him they seemed as important as the controversy we had with Germany. In the beginning he had made—as far as it was possible—neutrality a positive quality of mind. He would not move from that position.

That was his first error of judgment. And by insisting on this he soothed the people—sat them down in comfortable chairs and said, "Now stay there." He really suppressed speech and thought.

The second error he made was in thinking that he could

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<sup>1</sup>At the meeting of Page and the President at Shadow Lawn, September 22, 1916. See Chapter XIX.

play a great part as peacemaker—come and give a blessing to these erring children. This was strong in his hopes and ambitions. There was a condescension in this attitude that was offensive.

He shut himself up with these two ideas and engaged in what he called “thought.” The air currents of the world never ventilated his mind.

This inactive position he has kept as long as public sentiment permitted. He seems no longer to regard himself nor to speak as a leader—only as the mouthpiece of public opinion after opinion has run over him.

He has not breathed a spirit into the people: he has encouraged them to supineness. He is *not* a leader, but rather a stubborn phrasemaker.

And now events and the aroused people seem to have brought the President to the necessary point of action; and even now he may act timidly.

“One thing pleases me,” Page wrote to his son Arthur, “I never lost faith in the American people. It is now clear that I was right in feeling that they would have gladly come in any time after the *Lusitania* crime, Middle West in the front, and that the German hasn’t made any real impression on the American nation. He was made a bug-a-boo and worked for all he was worth by Bernstorff; and that’s the whole story. We are as Anglo-Saxon as we ever were. If Hughes had had sense and courage enough to say: ‘I’m for war, war to save our honour and to save democracy,’ he would now be President. If Wilson had said that, Hughes would have carried no important states in the Union. The suppressed people would have risen to either of them. That’s God’s truth as I believe it. The real United States is made up of you

and Frank and the Page boys at Aberdeen and of the 10,000,000 other young fellows who are ready to do the job and who instinctively see the whole truth of the situation. But of course what the people would not have done under certain conditions—that water also has flowed over the dam; and I mention it only because I have resolutely kept my faith in the people and there has been nothing in recent events that has shaken it.”

Two letters which Page wrote on this same April 1st are interesting in that they outline almost completely the war policy that was finally carried out:

*To Frank N. Doubleday*

Embassy of the United States of America,  
April 1, 1917.

DEAR EFFENDI:

Here's the programme:

- (1) Our navy in immediate action in whatever way a conference with the British shows we can best help.
- (2) A small expeditionary force to France immediately—as large as we can quickly make ready, if only 10,000 men—as proof that we are ready to do some fighting.
- (3) A large expeditionary force as soon as the men can be organized and equipped. They can be trained into an effective army in France in about one fourth of the time that they could be trained anywhere else.
- (4) A large loan to the Allies at a low rate of interest.
- (5) Ships, ships, ships—troop ships, food ships, munition ships, auxiliary ships to the navy, wooden ships, steel ships, little ships, big ships, ships, ships, ships without number or end.
- (6) A clear-cut expression of the moral issue involved



in the war. Every social and political ideal that we stand for is at stake. If we value democracy in the world, this is the chance to further it or—to bring it into utter disrepute. After Russia must come Germany and Austria; and then the King-business will pretty nearly be put out of commission.

(7) We must go to war in dead earnest. We must sign the Allies' agreement not to make a separate peace, and we must stay in to the end. Then the end will be very greatly hastened.

It's been four years ago to-day since I was first asked to come here. God knows I've done my poor best to save our country and to help. It'll be four years in the middle of May since I sailed. I shall still do my best. I'll not be able to start back by May 15th, but I have a feeling, if we do our whole duty in the United States, that the end may not be very many months off. And how long off it may be may depend to a considerable degree on our action.

We are faring very well on army rations. None of us will live to see another time when so many big things are at stake nor another time when our country can play so large or important a part in saving the world. Hold up your end. I'm doing my best here.

I think of you engaged in the peaceful work of instructing the people, and I think of the garden and crocuses and the smell of early spring in the air and the earth and—push on; I'll be with you before we grow much older or get much grayer; and a great and prosperous and peaceful time will lie before us. Pity me and hold up your end for real American participation. Get together? Yes; but the way to get together is to get in!

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

*To David F. Houston*<sup>1</sup>

Embassy of the United States of America,  
April 1, 1917.

DEAR HOUSTON:

The Administration can save itself from becoming a black blot on American history only by vigorous action—acts such as these:

Putting our navy to work—vigorous work—wherever and however is wisest. I have received the Government's promise to send an Admiral here at once for a conference. We must work out with the British Navy a programme whereby we can best help; and we must carry it without hesitancy or delay.

Sending over an expeditionary military force immediately—a small one, but as large as we can, as an earnest of a larger one to come. This immediate small one will have a good moral effect; and we need all the moral reinstatement that we can get in the estimation of the world; our moral stock is lower than, I fear, any of you at home can possibly realize. As for a larger expeditionary force later—even that ought to be sent quite early. It can and must spend some time in training in France, whatever its training beforehand may have been. All the military men agree that soldiers in France back of the line can be trained in at least half the time that they can be trained anywhere else. The officers at once take their turn in the trenches, and the progress that they and their men make in close proximity to the fighting is one of the remarkable discoveries of the war. The British Army was so trained and all the colonial forces. Two or three or four hundred thousand Americans could be sent over as soon almost as they are organized and equipped—provided transports

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<sup>1</sup>Secretary of Agriculture in President Wilson's Cabinet.

and a continuous supply of food and munition ships can be got. They can be trained into fighting men—into an effective army—in about one third of the time that would be required at home.

I suppose, of course, we shall make at once a large loan to the Allies at a low rate of interest. That is most important, but that alone will not save us. We must also *fight*.

All the ships we can get—build, requisition, or confiscate—are needed immediately

Navy, army, money, ships—these are the first things, but by no means all. We must make some expression of a conviction that there is a moral question of right and wrong involved in this war—a question of humanity, a question of democracy. So far we have (officially) spoken only of the wrongs done to our ships and citizens. Deep wrongs have been done to all our moral ideas, to our ideals. We have sunk very low in European opinion because we do not seem to know even yet that a German victory would be less desirable than (say) a Zulu victory of the world.

We must go in with the Allies, not begin a mere single fight against submarines. We must sign the pact of London—not make a separate peace.

We mustn't longer spin dreams about peace, nor leagues to enforce peace, nor the Freedom of the Seas. These things are mere intellectual diversions of minds out of contact with realities. Every political and social ideal we have is at stake. If we make them secure, we'll save Europe from destruction and save ourselves, too.

I pray for vigour and decision and clear-cut resolute action.

- (1) The Navy—full strength, no “grapejuice” action.
- (2) An immediate expeditionary force.

- (3) A larger expeditionary force very soon.
- (4) A large loan at a low interest.
- (5) Ships, ships, ships.
- (6) A clear-cut expression of the moral issue. Thus (and only thus) can we swing into a new era, with a world born again.

Yours in strictest confidence,

W. H. P.

A memorandum, written on April 3rd, the day after President Wilson advised Congress to declare a state of war with Germany:

### *The Day*

When I went to see Mr. Balfour to-day he shook my hand warmly and said: "It's a great day for the world." And so has everybody said, in one way or another, that I have met to-day.

The President's speech did not appear in the morning papers—only a very brief summary in one or two of them; but the meaning of it was clear. The fact that the House of Representatives organized itself in one day and that the President addressed Congress on the evening of that day told the story. The noon papers had the President's speech in full; and everybody applauds.

My "Cabinet" meeting this morning was unusually interesting; and the whole group has never before been so delighted. I spoke of the suggestive, constructive work we have already done in making reports on various war preparations and activities of this kingdom. "Now we have greater need than ever, every man to do constructive work—to think of plans to serve. We are in



this excellent strategical position in the capital of the greatest belligerent—a position which I thank my stars, the President, and all the powers that be for giving us. We can each strive to justify our existence.”

Few visitors called; but enthusiastic letters have begun to come in.

Nearly the whole afternoon was spent with Mr. Balfour and Lord Robert Cecil. Mr. Balfour had a long list of subjects. Could we help in (1)—(2)—(3)?— Every once in a while he stopped his enumeration of subjects long enough to tell me how the action of the United States had moved him.

To Lord Robert I said: “I pray you, give the Black List a decent burial: It’s dead now, but through no act of yours. It insulted every American because you did not see that it was insulting: that’s the discouraging fact to me.” He thanked me earnestly. He’ll think about that.

## II

These jottings give only a faint impression of the change which the American action wrought in Page. The strain which he had undergone for twenty-nine months had been intense; it had had the most unfortunate effect upon his health; and the sudden lifting might have produced that reaction for the worse which is not unusual after critical experiences of this kind. But the gratification which Page felt in the fact that the American spirit had justified his confidence gave him almost a certain exuberance of contentment. Londoners who saw him at that time describe him as acting like a man from whose shoulders a tremendous weight had suddenly been removed. For more than two years Page had been compelled, officially at least, to assume a “neutrality” with

which he had never had the slightest sympathy, but the necessity for this mask now no longer existed. A well-known Englishman happened to meet Page leaving his house in Grosvenor Square the day after the Declaration of War. He stopped and shook the Ambassador's hand.

"Thank God," the Englishman said, "that there is one hypocrite less in London to-day."

"What do you mean?" asked Page.

"I mean you. Pretending all this time that you were neutral! That isn't necessary any longer."

"You are right!" the Ambassador answered as he walked on with a laugh and a wave of the hand.

A few days after the Washington Declaration, the American Luncheon Club held a feast in honour of the event. This organization had a membership of representative American business men in London, but its behaviour during the war had not been based upon Mr. Wilson's idea of neutrality. Indeed its tables had so constantly rung with denunciations of the *Lusitania* notes that all members of the American Embassy, from Page down, had found it necessary to refrain from attending its proceedings. When Page arose to address his compatriots on this occasion, therefore, he began with the significant words, "I am glad to be back with you *again*," and the mingled laughter and cheers with which this remark was received indicated that his hearers had caught the point.

The change took place not only in Page, but in London and the whole of Great Britain. An England that had been saying harsh things of the United States for nearly two years now suddenly changed its attitude. Both houses of Parliament held commemorative sessions in honour of America's participation; in the Commons Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Asquith, and other leaders welcomed their new allies, and in the Upper Chamber Lord Curzon, Lord

Bryce, the Archbishop of Canterbury, and others similarly voiced their admiration. The Stars and Stripes almost instantaneously broke out on private dwellings, shops, hotels, and theatres; street hucksters did a thriving business selling rosettes of the American colours, which even the most stodgy Englishmen did not disdain to wear in their buttonholes; wherever there was a band or an orchestra, the Star Spangled Banner acquired a sudden popularity; and the day even came when the American and the British flags flew side by side over the Houses of Parliament—the first occasion in history that any other than the British standard had received this honour. The editorial outgivings of the British press on America's entrance form a literature all their own. The theatres and the music halls, which had found in "notes" and "neutrality" an endless theme of entertainment for their patrons, now sounded Americanism as their most popular refrain. Churches and cathedrals gave special services in honour of American intervention, and the King and the President began to figure side by the side in the prayer book. The estimation in which President Wilson was held changed overnight. All the phrases that had so grieved Englishmen were instantaneously forgotten. The President's address before Congress was praised as one of the most eloquent and statesmanlike utterances in history. Special editions of this heartening document had a rapid sale; it was read in school houses, churches, and at public gatherings, and it became a most influential force in uplifting the hopes of the Allies and inspiring them to renewed activities. Americans everywhere, in the streets, at dinner tables, and in general social intercourse, could feel the new atmosphere of respect and admiration which had suddenly become their country's portion. The first American troops that passed through London—a company of en-

gineers, an especially fine body of men—aroused a popular enthusiasm which was almost unprecedented in a capital not celebrated for its emotional displays. Page himself records one particularly touching indication of the feeling for Americans which was now universal. "The increasing number of Americans who come through England," he wrote, "most of them on their way to France, but some of them also to serve in England, give much pleasure to the British public—nurses, doctors, railway engineers, sawmill units, etc. The sight of every American uniform pleases London. The other morning a group of American nurses gathered with the usual crowd in front of Buckingham Palace while the Guards band played inside the gates. Man after man as they passed them and saw their uniforms lifted their hats."

The Ambassador's mail likewise underwent a complete transformation. His correspondence of the preceding two years, enormous in its extent, had contained much that would have disturbed a man who could easily get excited over trifles, but this aspect of his work never caused Page the slightest unhappiness. Almost every crank in England who disliked the American policy had seemed to feel it his duty to express his opinions to the American Ambassador. These letters, at times sorrowful, at others abusive, even occasionally threatening, varying in their style from cultivated English to the grossest illiteracy, now written in red ink to emphasize their bitterness, now printed in large block letters to preserve their anonymity, aroused in Page only a temporary amusement. But the letters that began to pour in upon him after our Declaration, many of them from the highest placed men and women in the Kingdom, brought out more vividly than anything else the changed position of his country. Sonnets and verses rained upon the Embassy, most of



them pretty bad as poetry, but all of them commendable for their admiring and friendly spirit. Of all these letters those that came from the steadfast friends of America perhaps gave Page the greatest satisfaction. "You will have been pleased at the universal tribute paid to the spirit as well as to the lofty and impressive terms of the President's speech," wrote Lord Bryce. "Nothing finer in our time, few things so fine." But probably the letter which gave Page the greatest pleasure was that which came from the statesman whose courtesy and broad outlook had eased the Ambassador's task in the old neutrality days. In 1916, Sir Edward Grey—now become Viscount Grey of Fallodon—had resigned office, forced out, Page says in one of his letters, mainly because he had refused to push the blockade to a point where it might produce a break with the United States. He had spent the larger part of the time since that event at his country place in Northumberland, along the streams and the forests which had always given him his greatest pleasure, attempting to recover something of the health that he had lost in the ten years which he had spent as head of the British Foreign Office and bearing with characteristic cheerfulness and fortitude the tragedy of a gradually failing eyesight. The American Declaration of War now came to Lord Grey as the complete justification of his policy. The main-spring of that policy, as already explained, had been a determination to keep the friendship of the United States, and so shape events that the support of this country would ultimately be cast on the side of the Allies. And now the great occasion for which he had prepared had come, and in Grey's mind this signified more than a help to England in soldiers and ships; it meant bringing together the two branches of a common race for the promotion of common ideals.

*From Viscount Grey of Fallodon*

Rosehall Post Office,  
Sutherland,  
April 8, 1917.

DEAR MR. PAGE:

This is a line that needs no answer to express my congratulations on President Wilson's address. I can't express adequately all that I feel. Great gratitude and great hope are in my heart. I hope now that some great and abiding good to the world will yet be wrought out of all this welter of evil. Recent events in Russia, too, stimulate this hope: they are a good in themselves, but not the power for good in this war that a great and firmly established free country like the United States can be. The President's address and the way it has been followed up in your country is a splendid instance of great action finely inspired. I glow with admiration.

Yours sincerely,  
GREY OF FALLODON

One Englishman who was especially touched by the action of the United States was His Majesty the King. Few men had watched the course of America during the war with more intelligent interest than the head of the British royal house. Page had had many interviews with King George at Buckingham Palace and at Windsor, and his notes contain many appreciative remarks on the King's high character and conscientious devotion to his duties. That Page in general did not believe in kings and emperors as institutions his letters reveal; yet even so profound a Republican as he recognized sterling character, whether in a crowned head or in a humble citizen, and he had seen enough of King George to respect him. Moreover,

the peculiar limitations of the British monarchy certainly gave it an unusual position and even saved it from much of the criticism that was fairly lavished upon such nations as Germany and Austria. Page especially admired King George's frankness in recognizing these limitations and his readiness to accommodate himself to the British Constitution. On most occasions, when these two men met, their intercourse was certainly friendly or at least not formidable. After all formalities had been exchanged, the King would frequently draw the Ambassador aside; the two would retire to the smoking room, and there, over their cigars, discuss a variety of matters—submarines, international politics, the Irish question and the like. His Majesty was not averse even to bringing up the advantages of the democratic and the monarchical system. The King and Ambassador would chat, as Page himself would say, like "two human beings"; King George is an emphatic and vivacious talker, fond of emphasizing his remarks by pounding the table; he has the liveliest sense of humour, and enjoys nothing quite so much as a good story. Page found that, on the subject of the Germans, the King entertained especially robust views. "They are my kinsmen," he would say, "but I am ashamed of them."

Probably most Englishmen, in the early days of the war, preferred that the United States should not engage in hostilities; even after the *Lusitania*, the majority in all likelihood held this view. There are indications, however, that King George favoured American participation. A few days after the *Lusitania* sinking, Page had an audience for the purpose of presenting a medal sent by certain societies in New Orleans. Neither man was thinking much about medals that morning. The thoughts uppermost in their minds, as in the minds of most Americans and

Englishmen, were the *Lusitania* and the action that the United States was likely to take concerning it. After the formalities of presentation, the King asked Page to sit down and talked with him for more than half an hour. "He said that Germany was evidently trying to force the United States into the war; that he had no doubt we would soon be in it and that, for his part, he would welcome us heartily. The King also said he had reliable information from Germany, that the Emperor had wished to return a conciliatory answer to our *Lusitania* note, but that Admiral von Tirpitz had prevented it, even going so far as to 'threaten' the Kaiser. It appears that the Admiral insisted that the submarine was the only weapon the Germans could use with effect against England and that they could not afford to give it up. He was violent and the Kaiser finally yielded."<sup>1</sup>

The statement from the King at that crisis, that he would "heartily welcome the United States into the war," was interpreted by the Ambassador as amounting practically to an invitation—and certainly as expressing a wish that such an intervention should take place.

That the American participation would rejoice King George could therefore be taken for granted. Soon after this event, the Ambassador and Mrs. Page were invited to spend the night at Windsor.

"I arrived during the middle of the afternoon," writes Page, "and he sent for me to talk with him in his office.

"'I've a good story on you,' said he. 'You Americans have a queer use of the word "some," to express mere bigness or emphasis. We are taking that use of the word from you over here. Well, an American and an Englishman were riding in the same railway compartment. The

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<sup>1</sup>The quotation is from a memorandum of the conversation made by one of the secretaries of the American Embassy.



American read his paper diligently—all the details of a big battle. When he got done, he put the paper down and said: "Some fight!" "And some don't!" said the Englishman.'

"And the King roared. 'A good one on you!'

"The trouble with that joke, sir,' I ventured to reply, 'is that it's out of date.'

"He was in a very gay mood, surely because of our entry into the war. After the dinner—there were no guests except Mrs. Page and me, the members of his household, of course, being present—he became even familiar in the smoking room. He talked about himself and his position as king. 'Knowing the difficulties of a limited monarch, I thank heaven I am spared being an absolute one.'

"He went on to enumerate the large number of things he was obliged to do, for example, to sign the death warrant of every condemned man—and the little real power that he had—not at all in a tone of complaint, but as a merely impersonal explanation.

"Just how much power—perhaps 'influence' is a better word—the King has, depends on his personality. The influence of the throne—and of him on the throne, being a wholly thoughtful, industrious, and conscientious man—is very great—greatest of all in keeping the vested interests of the aristocratic social structure secure.

"Earlier than this visit to Windsor he sent for me to go to Buckingham Palace very soon after we declared war. He went over the whole course of events—and asked me many questions. After I had risen and said 'good-bye' and was about to bow myself out the door, he ran toward me and waving his hand cried out, 'Ah—Ah!—we knew where you stood all the time.'

"When General Pershing came along on his way to France, the King summoned us to luncheon. The

luncheon was eaten (here, as everywhere, strict war rations are observed) to a flow of general talk, with the Queen, Princess Mary, and one of the young Princes. When they had gone from the luncheon room, the King, General Pershing, and I stood smoking by the window; and the King at once launched into talk about guns, rifles, ammunition, and the American place in the battle line. Would our place be with the British or with the French or between the two?

“General Pershing made a diplomatic reply. So far as he knew the President hadn’t yet made a final decision, but there was a feeling that, since we were helping the British at sea, perhaps we ought to help the French on land.

“Then the King expressed the earnest hope that our guns and ammunition would match either the British or the French. Else if we happened to run out of ammunition we could not borrow from anybody. He thought it most unfortunate that the British and French guns and rifles were of different calibres.”

*To Arthur W. Page*

Brighton, England,  
April 28, 1917.

DEAR ARTHUR:

. . . Well, the British have given us a very good welcome into the war. They are not very skillful at such a task: they do not know how to say “Welcome” very vociferously. But they have said it to the very best of their ability. My speeches (which I send you, with some comment) were very well received indeed. Simple and obvious as they were, they meant a good deal of work.

I cannot conceal nor can I express my gratification that we are in the war. I shall always wonder but never find

out what influence I had in driving the President over. All I know is that my letters and telegrams for nearly two years—especially for the last twelve months—have put before him every reason that anybody has expressed why we should come in—in season and out of season. And there is no new reason—only more reason of the same old sort—why we should have come in now than there was why we should have come in a year ago. I suspect that the pressure of the press and of public opinion really became too strong for him. And, of course, the Peace-Dream blew up—was torpedoed, mined, shot, captured, and killed. I trust, too, much enlightenment will be furnished by the two Commissions now in Washington.<sup>1</sup> Yet it's comical to think of the attitude of the poor old Department last September and its attitude now. But thank God for it! Every day now brings a confession of the blank idiocy of its former course and its long argument! Never mind that, so long as we are now right.

I have such a sense of relief that I almost feel that my job is now done. Yet, I dare say, my most important work is still to come.

The more I try to reach some sort of rational judgment about the war, the more I find myself at sea. It does look as if the very crisis is near. And there can be no doubt now—not even, I hope, in the United States—about the necessity of a clear and decisive victory, nor about punishment. All the devastation of Northern France, which outbarbarizes barbarism, all the ships sunk, including hospital ships, must be paid for; that's all. There'll be famine in Europe whenever it end. Not only must these destructions be paid for, but the Hohenzollerns and all they stand for must go. Trust your Frenchman for that, if nobody else!

<sup>1</sup>The British and French Commissions, headed by Mr. Balfour and M. Viviani.

If Europe had the food wasted in the United States, it would make the difference between sustenance and famine. By the way, the submarine has made every nation a danger zone except those few that have self-feeding continents, such as ours. It can bring famine to any other kind of a country.

You are now out in the country again—good. Give Mollie my love and help her with the garden. I envy you the fresh green things to eat. Little Mollie, kiss her for granddaddy. The Ambassador, I suppose, waxes even sturdier, and I'm glad to hear that A. W. P., Jr., is picking up. Get him fed right at all costs. If Frank stays at home and Ralph and his family come up, you'll all have a fine summer. We've the very first hint of summer we've had, and it's cheerful to see the sky and to feel the sunshine.

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

*To Frank N. Doubleday*

American Embassy,  
London, May 3, 1917.

DEAR EFFENDI:

I aim this at you. It may hit a German submarine. But we've got to take our chances in these days of risk. Your letter from the tropics—a letter from you from any place is as scarce as peace!—gave me a pleasant thrill and reminder of a previous state of existence, a long way back in the past. I wonder if, on your side the ocean you are living at the rate of a century a year, as we are here? Here in bountiful England we are living on rations. I spent a night with the King a fortnight ago, and he gave us only so much bread, one egg apiece, and—lemonade. We are to begin bread tickets next week. All this is per-



fectly healthful and wholesome and as much as I ever eat. But the hard part of it is that it's necessary. We haven't more than six weeks' food supply and the submarines sunk eighty-eight ships—237,000 tons—last week. These English do not publish these harrowing facts, and nobody knows them but a few official people. And they are destroying the submarines at a most beggarly slow rate. They work far out at sea—100 to 200 miles—and it's as hard to find them as it would be to find whales. The simple truth is we are in a dangerous plight. If they could stop this submarine warfare, the war would pretty quickly be won, for the Germans are in a far worse plight for food and materials and they are getting much the worst of it on land. The war would be won this summer or autumn if the submarine could be put out of business. If it isn't, the Germans may use this success to keep their spirits up and go on till next year.

We (the United States) have about 40 destroyers. We are sending over 6! I'm doing my best to persuade the Government at Washington to send every one we have. But, since the British conceal the facts from their own press and the people and from all the world, the full pressure of the situation is hard to exert on Washington. Our Admiral (Sims) and I are trying our best, and we are spending enough on cables to build a destroyer. All this, you must, of course, regard as a dark secret; but it's a devilish black secret.

I don't mean that there's any danger of losing the war. Even if the British armies have to have their food cut down and people here go hungry, they'll win; but the winning may be a long time off. Nothing but their continued success can keep the Germans going. Their people are war-weary and hungry. Austria is knocked out and is starving. Turkey is done up but can go on living

on nothing, but not fighting much more. When peace comes, there'll be a general famine, on the continent at least, and no ships to haul food. This side of the world will have to start life all over again—with insufficient men to carry things on and innumerable maimed men who'll have (more or less) to be cared for. The horror of the whole thing nobody realizes. We've all got used to it here; and nobody clearly remembers just what the world was like in peace times; those times were so far away. All this I write not to fill you with horrors but to prove that I speak the literal truth when I say that it seems a hundred years since I had before heard from you.

Just how all this affects a man, no man can accurately tell. Of how much use I'll be when I can get home, I don't know. Sometimes I think that I shall be of vastly greater use than ever. Plans and publishing ambitions pop up in my mind at times which look good and promising. I see books and series of books. I see most useful magazine stuff. Then, before I can think anything out to a clear plan or conclusion, the ever-increasing official duties and responsibilities here knock everything else out of my head, perhaps for a whole month. It's a literal fact that many a month I do not have an hour to do with as I please nor to think about what I please, from the time I wake up till I go to bed. In spite of twenty-four secretaries (the best fellows that ever were and the best staff that any Embassy ever had in the world) more and more work comes to me. I thank Heaven we no longer have the interests of Germany, Austria, and Turkey to look after; but with our coming into the war, work in general has increased enormously. I have to spend very much more time with the different departments of the British Government on war plans and such like things. They have welcomed us in very handsomely; and one form of

their welcome is consulting with me about—navy plans, war plans, loans of billions, ships, censorship, secret service—everything you ever heard of. At first it seemed a little comical for the admirals and generals and the Governor of the Bank of England to come and ask for advice. But when I gave it and it worked out well, I went on and, after all, the thing's easier than it looks. With a little practice you can give these fellows several points in the game and play a pretty good hand. They don't know half as much as you might suppose they'd know. All these years of lecturing the State Department and the President got my hand in! The whole game is far easier than any small business. You always play with blue chips better than you play with white ones.

This country and these people are not the country and the people they were three years ago. They are very different. They are much more democratic, far less cocksure, far less haughty, far humbler. The man at the head of the army rose from the ranks. The Prime Minister is a poor Welsh schoolteacher's son, without early education. The man who controls all British shipping began life as a shipping "clark," at ten shillings a week. Yet the Lords and Ladies, too, have shown that they were made of the real stuff. This experience is making England over again. There never was a more interesting thing to watch and to be part of.

There are about twenty American organizations here—big, little, rag-tag, and bobtail. When we declared war, every one of 'em proceeded to prepare for some sort of celebration. There would have been an epidemic of Fourth-of-July oratory all over the town—before we'd done anything—Americans spouting over the edges and killing Kruger with their mouths. I got representatives of 'em all together and proposed that we hold our tongues

till we'd won the war—then we can take London. And to give one occasion when we might all assemble and dedicate ourselves to this present grim business, I arranged for an American Dedicatory Service at St. Paul's Cathedral. The royal family came, the Government came, the Allied diplomats came, my Lords and Ladies came, one hundred wounded American (Canadian) soldiers came—the pick of the Kingdom; my Navy and Army staff went in full uniform, the Stars and Stripes hung before the altar, a double brass band played the Star Spangled Banner and the Battle Hymn of the Republic, and an American bishop (Brent) preached a red-hot American sermon, the Archbishop of Canterbury delivered the benediction; and (for the first time in English history) a foreign flag (the Stars and Stripes) flew over the Houses of Parliament. It was the biggest occasion, so they say, that St. Paul's ever had. And there's been no spilling of American oratory since! If you had published a shilling edition of the words and music of the Star Spangled Banner and the Battle Hymn you could have sent a cargo of 'em here and sold them. There isn't paper enough in this Kingdom to get out an edition here.

Give my love to all the Doubledays and to all the fellows in the shop, and (I wonder if you will) try your hand at another letter. You write very legibly these days!

Sincerely yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

“Curiously enough,” Page wrote about this time, “these most exciting days of the war are among the most barren of exciting topics for private correspondence. The ‘atmosphere’ here is unchanging—to us—and the British are turning their best side to us continuously. They are increasingly appreciative, and they see more and more



clearly that our coming into the war is all that saved them from a virtual defeat—I mean the public sees this more and more clearly, for, of course, the Government has known it from the beginning. I even find a sort of morbid fear lest they do not sufficiently show their appreciation. The Archbishop last night asked me in an apprehensive tone whether the American Government and public felt that the British did not sufficiently show their gratitude. I told him that we did not come into the war to win compliments but to whip the enemy, and that we wanted all the help the British can give: that's the main thing; and that thereafter of course we liked appreciation, but that expressions of appreciation had not been lacking. Mr. Balfour and Sir Edward Carson also spoke to me yesterday much in the same tone as the Archbishop of Canterbury.

“Try to think out any line of action that one will, or any future sequence of events or any plan touching the war, one runs into the question whether the British are doing the best that could be done or are merely plugging away. They are, as a people, slow and unimaginative, given to over-much self-criticism; but they eternally hold on to a task or to a policy. Yet the question forever arises whether they show imagination, to say nothing of genius, and whether the waste of a slow, plodding policy is the necessary price of victory.

“Of course such a question is easy to ask and it is easy to give dogmatic answers. But it isn't easy to give an answer based on facts. Our General Lassiter,<sup>1</sup> for instance—a man of sound judgment—has in general been less hopeful of the military situation in France than most of the British officers. But he is just now returned from the front, much cheered and encouraged. ‘Lassiter,’ I

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<sup>1</sup>American military attaché in London.

asked, 'have the British in France or has any man among them what we call genius, or even wide vision; or are they merely plodding along at a mechanical task?' His answer was, 'We don't see genius till it has done its job. It is a mechanical task—yes, that's the nature of the struggle—and they surely do it with intelligence and spirit. There is waste. There is waste in all wars. But I come back much more encouraged.'

"The same sort of questions and answers are asked and given continuously about naval action. Every discussion of the possibility of attacking the German naval bases ends without a plan. So also with preventing the submarines from coming out. These subjects have been continuously under discussion by a long series of men who have studied them; and the total effect so far has been to leave them among the impossible tasks. So far as I can ascertain all naval men among the Allies agree that these things can't be done.

"Here again—Is this a merely routine professional opinion—a merely traditional opinion—or is it a lack of imagination? The question will not down. Yet it is impossible to get facts to combat it. What are the limits of the practicable?

"Mr. Balfour told me yesterday his personal conviction about the German colonies, which, he said, he had not discussed with his associates in the Cabinet. His firm opinion is that they ought not to be returned to the Germans, first for the sake of humanity. 'The natives—the Africans especially—have been so barbarously treated and so immorally that it would be inhuman to permit the Germans to rule and degrade them further. But Heaven forbid that we should still further enlarge the British Empire. As a practical matter I do not care to do that. Besides, we should incur the criticism of fighting

in order to get more territory, and that was not and is not our aim. If the United States will help us, my wish is that these German Colonies that we have taken, especially in Africa, should be "internationalized." There are great difficulties in such a plan, but they are not insuperable if the great Powers of the Allies will agree upon it.' And much more to the same effect. The parts of Asiatic Turkey that the British have taken, he thought, might be treated in the same way."

## CHAPTER XXII

### THE BALFOUR MISSION TO THE UNITED STATES

#### I

PAGE now took up a subject which had been near his heart for a long time. He believed that one of the most serious causes of Anglo-American misunderstanding was the fact that the leading statesmen of the two countries had never had any personal contact with one another. At one time, as this correspondence shows, the Ambassador had even hoped that President Wilson himself might cross the ocean and make the British people an official visit. The proposal, however, was made before the European war broke out, the occasion which Page had in mind being the dedication of Sulgrave Manor, the old English home of the Washington family, as a perpetual memorial to the racial bonds and common ideals uniting the two countries. The President found it impossible to act upon this suggestion and the outbreak of war made the likelihood of such a visit still more remote. Page had made one unsuccessful attempt to bring the American State Department and the British Foreign Office into personal contact. At the moment when American irritation had been most keen over the blockade and the blacklist, Page had persuaded the Foreign Office to invite to England Mr. Frank L. Polk, at that time Counsellor of the Department; the Ambassador believed that a few conversations between such an intelligent gentleman as Mr. Polk and the British statesmen would smooth



out all the points which were then making things so difficult. Unfortunately the pressure of work at Washington prevented Mr. Polk from accepting Sir Edward Grey's invitation.

But now a greater necessity for close personal association had arisen. The United States had entered the war, and this declaration had practically made this country an ally of Great Britain and France. The British Government wished to send a distinguished commission to the United States, for two reasons: first, to show its appreciation of the stand which America had taken, and secondly, to discuss plans for coöperation in the common task. Great Britain frankly admitted that it had made many mistakes in the preceding three years—mistakes naval, military, political, and economic; it would welcome an opportunity to display these errors to Washington, which might naturally hope to profit from them. As soon as his country was in the war, Page took up this suggestion with the Foreign Office. There was of course one man who was preëminently fitted, by experience, position, and personal qualities, to head such a commission; on this point there was no discussion. Mr. Balfour was now in his seventieth year; his activities in British politics dated back to the times of Disraeli; his position in Great Britain had become as near that of an "elder statesman" as is tolerable under the Anglo-Saxon system. By this time Page had established the friendliest possible relations with this distinguished man. Mr. Balfour had become Foreign Secretary in December, 1916, in succession to Lord Grey. Greatly as Page regretted the resignation of Grey, he was much gratified that Mr. Balfour had been selected to succeed him. Mr. Balfour's record for twenty-five years had been one of consistent friendliness toward the United States. When President Cleveland's Venezuelan message, in 1896,

had precipitated a crisis in the relations of the two countries, it was Mr. Balfour's influence which was especially potent in causing Great Britain to modify its attitude and to accept the American demand for arbitration. That action not only amicably settled the Venezuelan question; it marked the beginning of a better feeling between the English-speaking countries and laid the basis for that policy of benevolent neutrality which Great Britain had maintained toward the United States in the Spanish War. The excellent spirit which Mr. Balfour had shown at this crisis he had manifested on many occasions since. In the criticisms of the United States during the *Lusitania* troubles Mr. Balfour had never taken part. The era of "neutrality" had not ruffled the confidence which he had always felt in the United States. During all this time the most conspicuous dinner tables of London had rung with criticisms of American policy; the fact was well known, however, that Mr. Balfour had never sympathized with these reproaches; even when he was not in office, no unfriendly word concerning the United States had ever escaped his lips. His feeling toward this country was well shown in a letter which he wrote Page, in reply to one congratulating him on his seventieth birthday. "I have now lived a long life," said Mr. Balfour, "and most of my energies have been expended in political work, but if I have been fortunate enough to contribute, even in the smallest degree, to drawing closer the bonds that unite our two countries, I shall have done something compared with which all else that I may have attempted counts in my eyes as nothing."

Page's letters and notes contain many references to Mr. Balfour's kindly spirit. On the day following the dismissal of Bernstorff the American Ambassador lunched with the Foreign Secretary at No. 4 Carlton Gardens.

"Mr. Balfour," Page reported to Washington, "gave expression to the hearty admiration which he entertained for the President's handling of a difficult task. He said that never for a moment had he doubted the President's wisdom in the course he was pursuing. He had the profoundest admiration for the manner in which he had promptly broken with Germany after receiving Germany's latest note. Nor had he ever entertained the slightest question of the American people's ready loyalty to their Government or to their high ideals. One of his intellectual pleasures, he added, had long been contemplation of the United States as it is and, even more, as its influence in the world will broaden. 'The world,' said Mr. Balfour, 'will more and more turn on the Great Republic as on a pivot.'"

Occasionally Mr. Balfour's discussion of the United States would take a more pensive turn. A memorandum which Page wrote a few weeks after the above touches another point:

March 27, 1917.

I had a most interesting conversation with Mr. Balfour this afternoon. "It's sad to me," said he, "that we are so unpopular, so much more unpopular than the French, in your country. Why is it? The old school books?"

I doubted the school-book influence.

"Certainly their influence is not the main cause. It is the organized Irish. Then it's the effect of the very fact that the Irish question is not settled. You've had that problem at your very door for 300 years. What's the matter that you don't solve it?"

"Yes, yes,"—he saw it. But the plaintive tone of such a man asking such a question was significant and interesting and—sad.

Then I told him the curious fact that a British Government made up of twenty individuals, every one of whom is most friendly to the United States, will, when they act together as a Government, do the most offensive things. I mentioned the blacklist; I mentioned certain complaints that I then held in my hand—of Americans here who are told by the British Government that they must turn over to the British Government's agent in New York their American securities which they hold in America!

There's a sort of imperious, arrogant, Tory action that comes natural to the English Government, even when not natural to the individual Englishman.

On April 5th, the day before the United States formally declared war, Page notified Washington that the British Government wished Mr. Balfour to go to the United States as the head of a Commission to confer with our Government. "Mr. Balfour is chosen for this mission," Page reported, "not only because he is Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, but because he is personally the most distinguished member of the Government." Page tells the story in more detail in a letter to Mr. Polk, at that time Counsellor of the State Department.

*To Frank L. Polk*

London, May 3, 1917.

DEAR MR. POLK:

. . . Mr. Balfour accurately represents British character, British opinion, and the British attitude. Nobody who knows him and knows British character and the British attitude ever doubted that. I know his whole tribe, his home-life, his family connections, his friends; and, of course, since he became Foreign Secretary, I've come



to know him intimately. When the question first came up here of his going, of course I welcomed it enthusiastically. About that time during a two-hour conversation he asked me why the British were so unpopular in the United States. Among other reasons I told him that our official people on both sides steadfastly refused to visit one another and to become acquainted. Neither he nor Lord Grey, nor Mr. Asquith, nor Mr. Lloyd George, had ever been to the United States, nor any other important British statesman in recent times, and not a single member of the Administration was personally known to a single member of the British Government. "I'll go," said he, "if you are perfectly sure my going will be agreeable to the President." He himself recalled the fact, during one of our several conversations just before he left, that you had not come when he and Lord Grey had invited you. If you had come, by the way, this era of a better understanding would have begun then, and half our old troubles would then have been removed. Keeping away from one another is the best of all methods of keeping all old misunderstandings alive and of making new ones.

I have no doubt that Mr. Balfour's visit will cause visits of many first-class British statesmen during the war or soon afterward. That's all we need to bring about a perfect understanding.

You may remember how I tried to get an official report about the behaviour of the *Benham*,<sup>1</sup> and how, in the absence of that, Lord Beresford made a disagreeable speech about our Navy in the House of Lords, and how, when

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<sup>1</sup>The reference is to the attack made in October, 1916, by the German Submarine U-53, off Nantucket on several British ships. An erroneous newspaper account said that the *Benham*, an American destroyer, had moved in a way that facilitated the operations of the German submarine. This caused great bitterness in England, until Page showed the Admiralty a report from the Navy Department proving that the story was false.

months later you sent me Roosevelt's<sup>1</sup> letter, Lord Beresford expressed regret to me and said that he would explain in another speech. I hadn't seen the old fellow for a long time till a fortnight ago. He greeted me cheerily, and I said, "I don't think I ought to shake hands with you till you retract what you said about our navy." He insisted on my dining with him. He invited Admiral Sims also, and those two sailors had a jolly evening of it. Sims's coming has straightened out all that naval misunderstanding and more. He is of immense help to them and to us. But I'm going to make old Beresford's life a burden till he gets up in the Lords and takes that speech back—publicly. He's really all right; but it's just as well to keep the records right. The proceedings of the House of Lords are handsomely bound and go into every gentleman's library. I have seen two centuries of them in many a house.

We can now begin a distinctly New Era in the world's history and in its management if we rise to the occasion: there's not a shadow of doubt about that. And the United States can play a part bigger than we have yet dreamed of if we prove big enough to lead the British and the French instead of listening to Irish and Germans. Neither England nor France is a democracy—far from it. We can make them both democracies and develop their whole people instead of about 10 per cent. of their people. We have simply to conduct our affairs by a large national policy and not by the complaints of our really non-American people. See how a declaration of war has cleared the atmosphere!

We're happy yet, on rations. There are no potatoes. We have meatless days. Good wheat meantime is sunk

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<sup>1</sup>This, of course, is Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy in 1917.

every day. The submarine must be knocked out. Else the earth will be ruled by the German bayonet and natural living will be *verboten*. We'll all have to goose-step as the Crown Prince orders or—be shot. I see they now propose that the United States shall pay the big war indemnity in raw materials to the value of hundreds of billions of dollars! Not just yet, I guess!

As we get reports of what you are doing, it's most cheerful. I assure you, God has yet made nothing or nobody equal to the American people; and I don't think He ever will or can.

Sincerely yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

One of the curious developments of this Balfour Mission was a request from President Wilson that Great Britain should take some decisive step for the permanent settlement of the Irish question. "The President," this message ran, "wishes that, when you next meet the Prime Minister, you would explain to him that only one circumstance now appears to stand in the way of perfect coöperation with Great Britain. All Americans who are not immediately connected with Germany by blood ties find their one difficulty in the failure of Great Britain so far to establish a satisfactory form of self-government in Ireland. In the recent debates in Congress on the War Resolution, this sentiment was especially manifest. It came out in the speeches of those enemies of the Declaration who were not Irish themselves nor representatives of sections in which Irish voters possessed great influence—notably members from the Southern States.

"If the American people were once convinced that there was a likelihood that the Irish question would soon be settled, great enthusiasm and satisfaction would result

and it would also strengthen the coöperation which we are now about to organize between the United States and Great Britain. Say this in unofficial terms to Mr. Lloyd George, but impress upon him its very great significance. If the British Government should act successfully on this matter, our American citizens of Irish descent and to a great extent the German sympathizers who have made common cause with the Irish, would join hands in the great common cause."

*To the President*

London, May 4, 1917.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . It is a remarkable commentary on the insularity of the British and on our studied isolation that till Mr. Balfour went over not a member of this Government had ever met a member of our Administration! Quite half our misunderstandings were due to this. If I had the making of the laws of the two governments, I'd have a statutory requirement that at least one visit a year by high official persons should be made either way. We should never have had a blacklist, etc., if that had been done. When I tried the quite humble task of getting Polk to come and the excuse was made that he couldn't be spared from his desk—Mr. President, I fear we haven't half enough responsible official persons in our Government. I should say that no man even of Polk's rank ought to have a desk: just as well give him a mill-stone. Even I try not to have a desk: else I'd never get anything of importance done; for I find that talks and conferences in my office and in the government offices and wherever else I can find out things take all my waking hours. The Foreign Office here has about five high position men to every one in the State Department. God sparing me,



I'm going one of these days to prepare a paper for our Foreign Affairs Committee on the Waste of Having too Few High Grade Men in the Department of State; a Plea for Five Assistant Secretaries for Every One Now Existing and for Provision for International Visits by Them.

Here's an ancient and mouldy precedent that needs shattering—for the coming of our country into its proper station and influence in the world.

I am sure that Mr. Balfour's visit has turned out as well as I hoped, and my hopes were high. He is one of the most interesting men that I've ever had the honour to know intimately—he and Lord Grey. Mr. Balfour is a Tory, of course; and in general I don't like Tories, yet liberal he surely is—a sort of high-toned Scotch democrat. I have studied him with increasing charm and interest. Not infrequently when I am in his office just before luncheon he says, "Come, walk over and we'll have lunch with the family." He's a bachelor. One sister lives with him. Another (Lady Rayleigh, the wife of the great chemist and Chancellor of Cambridge University) frequently visits him. Either of those ladies could rule this Empire. Then there are nieces and cousins always about—people of rare cultivation, every one of 'em. One of those girls confirmed the story that "Uncle Arthur" one day concluded that the niblick was something more than a humble necessity of a bad golfer—that it had positive virtues of its own and had suffered centuries of neglect. He, therefore, proceeded to play with the niblick only, till he proved his case and showed that it is a club entitled to the highest respect.

A fierce old Liberal fighter in Parliamentary warfare, who entered politics about the time Mr. Balfour did, told me this story the other day. "I've watched Balfour,

for about forty years as a cat watches a rat. I hate his party. I hated him till I learned better, for I hated that whole Salisbury crowd. They wanted to Cecil everything. But I'll tell you, Sir, apropos of his visit to your country, that in all those years he has never spoken of the United States except with high respect and often with deep affection. I should have caught him, if he had."

I went with him to a college in London one afternoon where he delivered a lecture on Dryden, to prove that poetry can carry a certain cargo of argument but that argument can't raise the smallest flight of poetry. Dry as it sounds, it was as good a literary performance as I recall I ever heard.

At his "family" luncheon, I've found Lord Milner or Lord Lansdowne, or some literary man who had come in to find out from Lady Rayleigh how to conduct the Empire or to write a great book; and the modest old chemical Lord sits silent most of the time and now and then breaks loose to confound them all with a pat joke. This is a vigorous family, these Balfours. There's one of them (a cousin of some sort, I think, of the Foreign Secretary) who is a Lord of much of Scotland, about as tall as Ben Nevis is high—a giant of a man. One of his sons was killed early in the war and one was missing—whether dead or not he did not know. Mrs. Page expressed her hope one day to the old man that he had had news from his missing son. "No, no," said he simply, "and me lady is awearying."

We've been lucky, Mr. President, in these days of immortal horrors and of difficulties between two governments that did not know one another—uncommonly lucky, in the large chances that politics gives for grave errors, to have had two such men in the Foreign Office here as Lord Grey and Mr. Balfour. There are men who were

mentioned for this post that would have driven us mad—or to war with them. I'm afraid I've almost outgrown my living hero worship. There isn't worshipful material enough lying around in the world to keep a vigorous reverence in practice. But these two gentlemen by birth and culture have at least sometimes seemed of heroic size to me. It has meant much to know them well. I shall always be grateful to them, for in their quiet, forceful way they helped me much to establish right relations with these people—which, pray God, I hope to retain through whatever new trials we may yet encounter. For it will fall to us yet to loose and to free the British, and a Briton set free is an American. That's all you can do for a man or for a nation of men.

These Foreign Secretaries are not only men of much greater cultivation than their Prime Ministers but of greater moral force. But I've come to like Lloyd George very much. He'd never deliver a lecture on Dryden, and he doesn't even play a good game of golf; but he has what both Lord Grey and Mr. Balfour lack—a touch of genius—whatever that is—not the kind that takes infinite pains, but the kind that acts as an electric light flashed in the dark. He said to me the other day that experts have nearly been the death of him. “The Government has experts, experts, experts, everywhere. In any department where things are not going well, I have found boards and committees and boards of experts. But in one department at least I've found a substitute for them. I let twenty experts go and I put in one Man, and things began to move at once. Do you know any real Men? When you hear of any, won't you let me know?”

A little while ago he dined with me, and, after dinner, I took him to a corner of the drawing room and delivered your message to him about Ireland. “God knows, I'm try-

ing," he replied. "Tell the President that. And tell him to talk to Balfour." Presently he broke out—"Madmen, madmen—I never saw any such task," and he pointed across the room to Sir Edward Carson, his First Lord of the Admiralty—"Madmen." "But the President's right. We've got to settle it and we've got to settle it now." Carson and Jellicoe came across the room and sat down with us. "I've been telling the Ambassador, Carson, that we've got to settle the Irish question now—in spite of you."

"I'll tell you something else we've got to settle now," said Carson. "Else it'll settle us. That's the submarines. The press and public are working up a calculated and concerted attack on Jellicoe and me, and, if they get us, they'll get you. It's an attack on the Government made on the Admiralty. Prime Minister," said this Ulster pirate whose civil war didn't come off only because the big war was begun—"Prime Minister, it may be a fierce attack. Get ready for it." Well, it has been developing ever since. But I can't for the life of me guess at the possible results of an English Parliamentary attack on a government. It's like a baseball man watching a game of cricket. He can't see when the player is out or why, or what caused it. Of course, the submarine *may* torpedo Lloyd George and his Government. It looks very like it may overturn the Admiralty, as Gallipoli did. If this public finds out the whole truth, it will demand somebody's head. But I'm only a baseball man; cricket is beyond me.

But Lloyd George will outlive the war as an active force, whatever happen to him in the meantime. He's too heavily charged with electricity to stop activity. The war has ended a good many careers that seemed to have long promise. It is ending more every day. But there is



only one Lloyd George, and, whatever else he lack, he doesn't lack life.

I heard all the speeches in both Houses on the resolution of appreciation of our coming into the war—Bonar Law's, Asquith's (one of the best), Dillon's, a Labour man's, and, in the Lords, Curzon's, Crewe's, the Archbishop's (who delivered in the course of his remarks a benediction on me) and Bryce's (almost the best of all). It wasn't "oratory," but it was well said and well meant. They know how badly they need help and they do mean to be as good to us as their benignant insularity will permit. They are changing. I can't describe the great difference that the war has made in them. They'll almost become docile in a little more time.

And we came in in the nick of time for them—in very truth. If we hadn't, their exchange would have gone down soon and they know it. I shall never forget the afternoon I spent with Mr. Balfour and Mr. Bonar Law on that subject. They saw blue ruin without our financial help. And now, if we can save them from submarines, those that know will know how vital our help was. Again, the submarine is the great and grave and perhaps the only danger now. If that can be scotched, I believe the whole Teutonic military structure would soon tumble. If not, the Germans may go on as long as they can feed their army, allowing their people to starve.

Of course, you know, we're on rations now—yet we suffer no inconvenience on that score. But these queer people (they *are* the most amusing and confusing and contradictory of all God's creatures, these English, whose possibilities are infinite and whose actualities, in many ways, are pitiful)—these queer people are fiercely pursuing food-economy by discussing in the newspapers whether a hen consumes more food than she produces, and

whether what dogs eat contains enough human food to justify the shooting of every one in the Kingdom. That's the way we are coming down to humble fare. But nothing can quite starve a people who all live near the sea which yields fish enough near shore to feed them wastefully.

All along this South shore, where I am to-day,<sup>1</sup> I see the Stars and Stripes; and everywhere there is a demand for the words and music of the Battle Hymn of the Republic and the Star Spangled Banner.

This our-new-Ally business is bringing me a lot of amusing troubles. Theatres offer me boxes, universities offer me degrees, hospitals solicit visits from me, clubs offer me dinners—I'll have to get a new private secretary or two well-trained to say "No" politely, else I shall not have my work done. But all that will presently wear away as everything wears away (quickly, too) in the grim face of this bloody monster of war which is consuming men as a prairie fire consumes blades of grass. There's a family that lives around the corner from this hotel. One son is in the trenches, another is in a madhouse from shell-shock, a third coming home wounded the other day was barely rescued when a torpedo sunk a hospital ship and may lose his reason. I suppose I saw one hundred men this afternoon on a single mile of beach who had lost both legs. Through the wall from my house in London is a hospital. A young Texan has been there, whose legs are gone at the thighs and one arm at the elbow. God pity us for not having organized the world better than this! We'll do it, yet, Mr. President—you'll do it; and thank God for you. If we do not organize Europe

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<sup>1</sup>This letter is dated London and was probably begun there. It is evident, however, that the latter part was written at Brighton, where the Ambassador was taking a brief holiday.

and make another such catastrophe impossible, life will not be worth being born into except to the few whose days happen to fall between recurring devastations of the world.

Yours sincerely,

WALTER H. PAGE.

"I hope that the English people," Colonel House wrote to Page about this time, "realize how successful Mr. Balfour's visit to America really was. There is no man they could have sent who could have done it better. He and the President got along marvellously well. The three of us dined and spent the evening together and it was delightful to see how sympathetic their minds were."

A letter from Mr. Polk also discloses the impression which Mr. Balfour made upon Washington:

*From Frank L. Polk*

Washington, May 25, 1917.

MY DEAR MR. PAGE:

I just want to get off a line to catch the pouch.

You probably know what a wonderful success the British Mission has been, but I do not think you can realize what a deep impression they have made on all of us. Mr. Balfour really won the affection of us all, and I do not know when I was more sorry to have a man leave than I was to have him go last night. He expressed himself as having been very much impressed with his reception and the way he was treated. He was most fair in all discussions, and I think has a better understanding of our point of view. I had the good fortune of being present at the financial and the diplomatic conferences, and I think we all felt that we were dealing with a sympathetic friend.

He and the President got on tremendously. The best evidence of that was the fact that the President went up to Congress and sat in the gallery while Mr. Balfour addressed the House. This is without precedent.

The difficult problem of course was the blacklist and bunkering agreement, but I think we are by that. The important thing now is for the British to make all the concessions possible in connection with the release of goods in Rotterdam and the release of goods in Prize Court, though the cases have not been begun. Of course I mean cases of merely suspicion rather than where there is evidence of wrongdoing.

The sending of the destroyers and troops abroad is going to do a great deal toward impressing our people with the fact that we really are in the war. I do not think it is thoroughly borne home on the majority yet what a serious road we have chosen.

With warm regards,

Yours faithfully,

FRANK L. POLK.

Mr. Polk's reference to the blacklist recalls an episode which in itself illustrates the changed character of the relations that had now been established between the American and the British governments. Mr. Balfour discussed shipping problems for the most part with Mr. Polk, under whose jurisdiction these matters fell. As one of these conferences was approaching its end Mr. Balfour slightly coughed, uttered an "er," and gave other indications that he was about to touch upon a ticklish question.

"Before I go," he said, "there—er—is one subject I would—er—like to say something about."

Mr. Polk at once grasped what was coming.

"I know what you have in mind," said Mr. Polk in his



characteristically quick way. "You want us to apply your blacklist to neutrals."

In other words, the British hoped that the United States, now that it was in the war, would adopt against South America and other offenders those same discriminations which this country had so fiercely objected to, when it was itself a neutral.

The British statesman gave Mr. Polk one of his most winning smiles and nodded.

"Mr. Balfour," said Mr. Polk, "it took Great Britain three years to reach a point where it was prepared to violate all the laws of blockade. You will find that it will take us only two months to become as great criminals as you are!"

Mr. Balfour is usually not explosive in his manifestations of mirth, but his laughter, in reply to this statement, was almost uproarious. And the State Department was as good as its word. It immediately forgot all the elaborate "notes" and "protests" which it had been addressing to Great Britain. It became more inexorable than Great Britain had ever been in keeping foodstuffs out of neutral countries that were contiguous to Germany. Up to the time the United States entered the war, Germany, in spite of the watchful British fleet, had been obtaining large supplies from the United States through Holland, Denmark, and the Scandinavian peninsula. But the United States now immediately closed these leaks. In the main this country adopted a policy of "rationing"; that is, it would furnish the little nations adjoining Germany precisely the amount of food which they needed for their own consumption. This policy was one of the chief influences in undermining the German people and forcing their surrender. The American Government extended likewise the blacklist to South America and other coun-

tries, and, in doing so, it bettered the instruction of Great Britain herself.

Though the whole story of the blockade thus seems finally to have ended in a joke, the whole proceeding has its serious side. The United States had been posing for three years as the champion of neutral rights; the point of view of Washington had been that there was a great principle at stake. If such a principle were involved, it was certainly present in just the same degree after the United States became belligerent as in the days when we were neutrals. The lofty ideals by which the Administration had professed to be guided should have still controlled its actions; the mere fact that we, as a belligerent, could obtain certain advantages would hardly have justified a great and high-minded nation in abandoning its principles. Yet abandon them we did from the day that we declared war. We became just as remorseless in disregarding the rights of small states as Great Britain—according to our numerous blockade notes—had been. Possibly, therefore, Mr. Balfour's mirth was not merely sympathetic or humorous; it perhaps echoed his discovery that our position for three years had really been nothing but a sham; that the State Department had been forcing points in which it did not really believe, or in which it did not believe when American interests were involved. At any rate, this ending of our long argument with Great Britain was a splendid justification for Page; his contention had always been that the preservation of civilization was more important than the technicalities of the international lawyers. And now the Wilson Administration, by throwing into the waste basket all the finespun theories with which it had been embarrassing the Allied cause since August 4, 1914, accepted—and accepted joyously—his point of view.

## II

One of the first things which Mr. Balfour did, on his arrival in Washington, was personally to explain to President Wilson about the so-called "secret treaties." The "secret treaty" that especially preyed upon Mr. Wilson's mind, and which led to a famous episode at the Versailles Conference, was that which had been made with Italy in 1915, as consideration for Italy's participation in the war. Mr. Balfour, in telling the President of these territorial arrangements with Italy, naturally did not criticise his ally, but it was evident that he regarded the matter as something about which the United States should be informed.

"This is the sort of thing you have to do when you are engaged in a war," he explained, and then he gave Mr. Wilson the details.

Probably the most important information which Mr. Balfour and the French and Italian Commissions brought to Washington was the desperate situation of the Allied cause. On that point not one of the visiting statesmen or military and naval advisers made the slightest attempt at concealment. Mr. Balfour emphasized the seriousness of the crisis in one of his earliest talks with Mr. McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury. The British statesman was especially interested in the financial situation and he therefore took up this matter at an early date with the Treasury Department.

"Mr. Balfour," said Mr. McAdoo, "before we make any plans of financial assistance it is absolutely necessary that we know precisely where we stand. The all-important thing is the question as to how long the war is likely to last. If it is only to last a few months, it is evident that we need to make very different arrangements than if it is

to last several years. Just what must we make provision for? Let us assume that the United States goes in with all its men and resources—that we dedicate all our money, our manufacturing plants, our army, our navy, everything we have got, to bringing the war to an end. How long will it take?”

Mr. Balfour replied that it would be necessary to consult his naval and military advisers before he answered that question. He said that he would return in a day or two and make an explicit statement. He did so and his answer was this: Under these circumstances—that the United States should make war to the full limit of its power, in men and resources—the war could not be ended until the summer or the autumn of 1919. Mr. McAdoo put the same question in the same form to the French and Italian Missions and obtained precisely the same answer.

Page's papers show that Mr. Balfour, in the early stages of American participation, regarded the financial situation as the thing which chiefly threatened the success of the Allied cause. So much greater emphasis has been laid upon the submarine warfare that this may at first seem rather a misreading of Great Britain's peril. Yet the fact is that the high rate of exchange and the depredatory U-boat represented almost identically the same danger. The prospect that so darkened the horizon in the spring of 1917 was the possible isolation of Great Britain. England's weakness, as always, consisted in the fact that she was an island, that she could not feed herself with her own resources and that she had only about six weeks' supply of food ahead of her at any one time. If Germany could cut the lines of communication and so prevent essential supplies from reaching British ports, the population of Great Britain could be starved into



surrender in a very brief time, France would be overwhelmed, and the triumph of the Prussian cause would be complete. That the success of the German submarine campaign would accomplish this result was a fact that the popular mind readily grasped. What it did not so clearly see, however, was that the financial collapse of Great Britain would cut these lines of communication quite as effectually as the submarine itself. The British were practically dependent for their existence upon the food brought from the United States, just as the Allied armies were largely dependent upon the steel which came from the great industrial plants of this country. If Great Britain could not find the money with which to purchase these supplies, it is quite apparent that they could not be shipped. The collapse of British credit therefore would have produced the isolation of the British Isles and led to a British surrender, just as effectively as would the success of the German submarine campaign.

As soon as Bernstorff was sent home, therefore, and the participation of this country in the war became extremely probable, Mr. Balfour took up the financial question with Page.

### *To the President*

March 5, 1917.

The inquiries which I have made here about financial conditions disclose an international situation which is most alarming to the financial and industrial outlook of the United States. England has not only to pay her own war bills, but is obliged to finance her Allies as well. Up to the present time she has done these tasks out of her own capital. But she cannot continue her present extensive purchases in the United States without shipping gold as payment for them, and there are two reasons why she

cannot make large shipments of gold. In the first place, both England and France must keep the larger part of the gold they have to maintain issues of their paper at par; and, in the second place, the German U-boat has made the shipping of gold a dangerous procedure even if they had it to ship. There is therefore a pressing danger that the Franco-American and Anglo-American exchange will be greatly disturbed; the inevitable consequence will be that orders by all the Allied Governments will be reduced to the lowest possible amount and that trans-Atlantic trade will practically come to an end. The result of such a stoppage will be a panic in the United States. The world will therefore be divided into two hemispheres, one of them, our own, will have the gold and the commodities: the other, Great Britain and Europe, will need these commodities, but it will have no money with which to pay for them. Moreover, it will have practically no commodities of its own to exchange for them. The financial and commercial result will be almost as bad for the United States as for Europe. We shall soon reach this condition unless we take quick action to prevent it. Great Britain and France must have a credit in the United States which will be large enough to prevent the collapse of world trade and the whole financial structure of Europe.

If the United States declare war against Germany, the greatest help we could give Great Britain and its Allies would be such a credit. If we should adopt this policy, an excellent plan would be for our Government to make a large investment in a Franco-British loan. Another plan would be to guarantee such a loan. A great advantage would be that all the money would be kept in the United States. We could keep on with our trade and increase it, till the war ends, and after the war Europe would purchase food and an enormous supply of materials with

which to reëquip her peace industries. We should thus reap the profit of an uninterrupted and perhaps an enlarging trade over a number of years and we should hold their securities in payment.

On the other hand, if we keep nearly all the gold and Europe cannot pay for reëstablishing its economic life, there may be a world-wide panic for an indefinite period.

Of course we cannot extend such a credit unless we go to war with Germany. But is there no way in which our Government might immediately and indirectly help the establishment in the United States of a large Franco-British credit without violating armed neutrality? I do not know enough about our own reserve bank law to form an opinion. But these banks would avert such a danger if they were able to establish such a credit. Danger for us is more real and imminent, I think, than the public on either side the Atlantic understands. If it be not averted before its manifestations become apparent, it will then be too late to save the day.

The pressure of this approaching crisis, I am certain, has gone beyond the ability of the Morgan financial agency for the British and French governments. The financial necessities of the Allies are too great and urgent for any private agency to handle, for every such agency has to encounter business rivalries and sectional antagonisms.

It is not improbable that the only way of maintaining our present preëminent trade position and averting a panic is by declaring war on Germany. The submarine has added the last item to the danger of a financial world crash. There is now an uncertainty about our being drawn into the war; no more considerable credits can be privately placed in the United States. In the meantime a collapse may come.

Urgent as this message was, it really understated the desperate condition of British and Allied finances. That the warring powers were extremely pressed for money has long been known; but Page's papers reveal for the first time the fact that they were facing the prospect of bankruptcy itself. "The whole Allied combination on this side the ocean are very much nearer the end of their financial resources," he wrote in July, "than anybody has guessed or imagined. We only can save them. . . . The submarines are steadily winning the war. Pershing and his army have bucked up the French for the moment. But for his coming there was more or less danger of a revolution in Paris and of serious defection in the army. Everybody here fears that the French will fail before another winter of the trenches. Yet—the Germans must be still worse off."

The matter that was chiefly pressing at the time of the Balfour visit was the fact that the British balances in the New York banks were in a serious condition. It should always be remembered, however, that Great Britain was financing not only herself, but her Allies, and that the difficult condition in which she now found herself was caused by the not too considerate demands of the nations with which she was allied in the war. Thus by April 6, 1917, Great Britain had overdrawn her account with J. P. Morgan to the extent of \$400,000,000 and had no cash available with which to meet this overdraft. This obligation had been incurred in the purchase of supplies, both for Great Britain and the allied governments; and securities, largely British owned stocks and bonds, had been deposited to protect the bankers. The money was now coming due; if the obligations were not met, the credit of Great Britain in this country would reach the vanishing point. Though at first there was a slight misunder-



standing about this matter, the American Government finally paid this over-draft out of the proceeds of the first Liberty Loan. This act saved the credit of the allied countries; it was, of course, only the beginning of the financial support that America brought to the allied cause; the advances that were afterward furnished from the American Treasury made possible the purchases of food and supplies in enormous quantities. The first danger that threatened, the isolation and starvation of Great Britain, was therefore overcome. It was the joint product of Page's work in London and that of the Balfour Commission in the United States.

### III

Until these financial arrangements had been made there was no certainty that the supplies which were so essential to victory would ever leave the United States; this obstruction at the source had now been removed. But the greater difficulty still remained. The German submarines were lying off the waters south and west of Ireland ready to sink the supply ships as soon as they entered the prohibited zone. Mr. Balfour and his associates were working also on this problem in Washington; and, at the same time, Page and Admiral Sims and the British Admiralty were bending all their energies in London to obtain immediate coöperation.

A remark which Mr. Balfour afterward made to Admiral Sims shows the frightful nature of the problem which was confronting Great Britain at that time.

"That was a terrible week we spent at sea in that voyage to the United States," Mr. Balfour said. "We knew that the German submarine campaign was succeeding. Their submarines were destroying our shipping and we

had no means of preventing it. I could not help thinking that we were facing the defeat of Great Britain."

Page's papers show that as early as February 25th he understood in a general way the disheartening proportions of the German success. "It is a momentous crisis," he wrote at that time. "The submarines are destroying shipping at an appalling rate." Yet it was not until Admiral Sims arrived in London, on April 9th, that the Ambassador learned all the details. In sending the Admiral to England the Navy Department had acted on an earnest recommendation from Page. The fact that the American Navy was inadequately represented in the British capital had long been a matter of embarrassment to him. The ability and personal qualifications of our attachés had been unquestioned; but none of them during the war had been men of high rank, and this in itself proved to be a constant impediment to their success. While America was represented by Commanders, Japan, Italy, and France had all sent Admirals to London. Page's repeated requests for an American Admiral had so far met with no response, but the probability that this country would become involved in the war now gave new point to his representations. In the latter part of March, Page renewed his request in still more urgent form, and this time the President and the Navy Department responded favourably. The result was that, on April 9th, three days after the American declaration of war, Admiral Sims and his flag-lieutenant, Commander Babcock, presented themselves at the American Embassy. There was little in the appearance of these men to suggest a violent naval demonstration against Germany. Both wore civilian dress, their instructions having commanded them not to bring uniforms; both were travelling under assumed names, and both had no more definite orders than to in-

investigate the naval situation and cable the results to Washington. In spite of these attempts at secrecy, the British had learned that Admiral Sims was on the way; they rejoiced not only in this fact, but in the fact that Sims had been chosen, for there was no American naval officer whose professional reputation stood so high in the British Navy or who was so personally acceptable to British officialdom and the British public. The Admiralty therefore met Admiral Sims at Liverpool, brought him to London in a special train, and, a few hours after his arrival, gave him the innermost secrets on the submarine situation—secrets which were so dangerous that not all the members of the British Cabinet had been let into them.

Page welcomed Admiral Sims with a cordiality which that experienced sea veteran still gratefully remembers. He at once turned over to him two rooms in the Embassy. "You can have everything we've got," the Ambassador said. "If necessary to give you room, we'll turn the whole Embassy force out into the street." The two men had not previously met, but in an instant they became close friends. A common sympathy and a common enthusiasm were greatly needed at that crisis. As soon as Admiral Sims had finished his interview with Admiral Jellicoe, he immediately sought out the Ambassador and laid all the facts before him. Germany was winning the war. Great Britain had only six weeks' food supply on hand, and the submarines were sinking the ships at a rate which, unless the depredations should be checked, meant an early and unconditional surrender of the British Empire. Only the help of the United States could prevent this calamity.

Page, of course, was aghast: the facts and figures Admiral Sims gave him disclosed a situation which was even more desperate than he had imagined. He advised the Admiral to cable the whole story immediately to Wash-

ington. Admiral Sims at first had some difficulty in obtaining the Admiralty's consent to doing this, and the reason was the one with which Page had long been familiar—the fear, altogether too justified, that the news would “leak” out of Washington. Of course there was no suspicion in British naval circles of the good faith of the Washington officials, but important facts had been sent so many times under the seal of the strictest secrecy and had then found their way into the newspapers that there was a deep distrust of American discretion. Certainly no greater damage could have been done the allied cause at that time than to have the Germans learn how successfully their submarine campaign was progressing. The question was referred to the Imperial War Council and its consent obtained. The report, however, was sent to the Navy Department in the British naval code, and decoded in the British Embassy in Washington.

Admiral Sims's message gave all the facts about the submarine situation, and concluded with the recommendation that the United States should assemble all floating craft that could be used in the anti-submarine warfare, destroyers, tugs, yachts, light cruisers, and similar vessels, and send them immediately to Queenstown, where they would do valuable service in convoying merchant vessels and destroying the U-boats. At that time the American Navy had between fifty and sixty destroyers that were patrolling the American coast; these could have been despatched, almost immediately, to the scene of operations; but, in response to this request, the Department sent six to Queenstown.

The next few months were very unhappy ones for Admiral Sims. He was the representative in London of one of the world's greatest naval powers, participating in the greatest war that had ever enlisted its energies, yet his



constant appeals for warships elicited the most inadequate response, his well-reasoned recommendations for meeting the crisis were frequently unanswered and at other times were met with counter-proposals so childish that they seemed almost to have originated in the brains of newspaper amateurs, and his urgent pictures of a civilization rapidly going to wreck were apparently looked upon with suspicion as the utterances of a man who had been completely led astray by British guile. To give a fair idea of Washington's neglect during this period it is only necessary to point out that, for four months, Admiral Sims occupied the two rooms in the Embassy directly above Page's, with Commander Babcock as his only aid. Sims's repeated requests to Secretary Daniels for an additional staff went unheeded. Had it not been for the Admiral's constant daily association with Page and the comfort and encouragement which the Ambassador gave him, this experience would have been almost unbearable. In the latter part of April, the Admiral's appeals to Washington having apparently fallen on deaf ears, he asked Page to second his efforts. The Admiral and Commander Babcock wrote another message, and drove in a motor car to Brighton, where Page was taking a little rest. The Admiral did not know just how strong a statement the Ambassador would care to sponsor, and so he did not make this representation as emphatic as the judgment of both men would have preferred.

The Admiral handed Page the paper, saying that he had prepared it with the hope that the Ambassador would sign it and send it directly to President Wilson.

"It is quite apparent," Admiral Sims said, "that the Department doesn't believe what I have been saying. Or they don't believe what the British are saying. They think that England is exaggerating the peril for reasons

of its own. They think I am hopelessly pro-British and that I am being used. But if you'll take it up directly with the President, then they may be convinced."

Page put on his spectacles, took the paper, and read it through. Then, looking over the rim of his glasses in his characteristic way, he leaned toward Admiral Sims and said:

"Admiral, it isn't half strong enough! I think I can write a better despatch than that, myself! At least let me try."

He immediately took a pen and paper and in a few minutes he had written his own version which he gave the Admiral to read. The latter was delighted with it and in a brief time it was on its way to Washington.

From: Ambassador Page.

To: Secretary of State.

Sent: 27 April, 1917.

*Very confidential for Secretary and President*

There is reason for the greatest alarm about the issue of the war caused by the increasing success of the German submarines. I have it from official sources that during the week ending 22nd April, 88 ships of 237,000 tons, allied and neutral, were lost. The number of vessels unsuccessfully attacked indicated a great increase in the number of submarines in action.

This means practically a million tons lost every month till the shorter days of autumn come. By that time the sea will be about clear of shipping. Most of the ships are sunk to the westward and southward of Ireland. The British have in that area every available anti-submarine craft, but their force is so insufficient that they hardly discourage the submarines.

The British transport of troops and supplies is already strained to the utmost, and the maintenance of the armies in the field is threatened. There is food enough here to last the civil population only not more than six weeks or two months.

Whatever help the United States may render at any time in the future, or in any theatre of the war, our help is now more seriously needed in this submarine area for the sake of all the Allies than it can ever be needed again, or anywhere else.

After talking over this critical situation with the Prime Minister and other members of the Government, I cannot refrain from most strongly recommending the immediate sending over of every destroyer and all other craft that can be of anti-submarine use. This seems to me the sharpest crisis of the war, and the most dangerous situation for the Allies that has arisen or could arise.

If enough submarines can be destroyed in the next two or three months, the war will be won, and if we can contribute effective help immediately, it will be won directly by our aid. I cannot exaggerate the pressing and increasing danger of this situation. Thirty or more destroyers and other similar craft sent by us immediately would very likely be decisive.

There is no time to be lost.

(Signed) PAGE.

This cablegram had a certain effect. The reply came from Washington that "eventually" thirty-six destroyers would be sent.

Page's letters of this period are full of the same subject.

*To the President*

London, May 4, 1917.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The submarines have become a very grave danger. The loss of British and allied tonnage increases with the longer and brighter days—as I telegraphed you, 237,000 tons last week; and the worst of it is, the British are not destroying them. The Admiralty publishes a weekly report which, though true, is not the whole truth. It is known in official circles here that the Germans are turning out at least two a week—some say three; and the British are not destroying them as fast as new ones are turned out. If merely the present situation continue, the war will pretty soon become a contest of endurance under hunger, with an increasing proportion of starvation. Germany is yet much the worse off, but it will be easily possible for Great Britain to suffer to the danger point next winter or earlier unless some decided change be wrought in this situation.

The greatest help, I hope, can come from us—our destroyers and similar armed craft—provided we can send enough of them quickly. The area to be watched is so big that many submarine hunters are needed. Early in the war the submarines worked near shore. There are very many more of them now and their range is one hundred miles, or even two hundred, at sea.

The public is becoming very restive with its half-information, and it is more and more loudly demanding all the facts. There are already angry threats to change the personnel of the Admiralty; there is even talk of turning out the Government. “We must have results, we must have results.” I hear confidentially that Jellicoe has threatened to resign unless the Salonica expedition is



brought back: to feed and equip that force requires too many ships.

And there are other troubles impending. Norway has lost so many of her ships that she dare not send what are left to sea. Unarmed they'll all perish. If she arm them, Germany will declare war against her. There is a plan on foot for the British to charter these Norwegian ships and to arm them, taking the risk of German war against Norway. If war come (as it is expected) England must then defend Norway the best she can. And *then England may ask for our big ships to help in these waters*. All this is yet in the future, but possibly not far in the future.

For the present the only anti-submarine help is the help we may be able to give to patrol the wide area off Ireland. If we had one hundred destroyers to send, the job there could, I am told, be quickly done. A third of that number will help mightily. At the present rate of destruction more than four million tons will be sunk before the summer is gone.

Such is this dire submarine danger. The English thought that they controlled the sea; the Germans, that they were invincible on land. Each side is losing where it thought itself strongest.

Admiral Sims is of the greatest help imaginable. Of course, I gave him an office in one of our Embassy buildings, and the Admiralty has given him an office also with them. He spends much of his time there, and they have opened all doors and all desks and drawers to him. He strikes me (and the English so regard him) as a man of admirable judgment—unexcitable and indefatigable. I hope we'll soon send a general over, to whom the War Department will act similarly. Hoover, too, must have a good man here as, I dare say, he has already made known. These will cover the Navy, the Army, Food, and Shipping.

Perhaps a Censor and an Intelligence (Secret Service) group ought to come. I mean these for permanent—at least indefinite—service. Exchange visits by a Congressional Committee (such as the French and British make) and by high official persons such as members of your Cabinet (such also as the French and British make)—you will have got ideas about these from Mr. Balfour.

W. H. P.

In the latter part of June Admiral Sims went to Queenstown. Admiral Bayly, who directed the operation of the anti-submarine forces there, had gone away for a brief rest, and Admiral Sims had taken over the command of both the British and American forces at that point. This experience gave Admiral Sims a first-hand picture of a really deplorable situation. The crisis was so desperate that he made another appeal to Page.

*From Admiral William S. Sims*

Admiralty House, Queenstown,  
June 25, 1917.

MY DEAR MR. PAGE:

I enclose herewith a letter on the submarine situation.<sup>1</sup>

I think I have made it plain therein that the Allies are losing the war; that it will be already lost when the loss of shipping reaches the point where fully adequate supplies cannot be maintained on the various battle fronts.

I cannot understand why our Government should hesitate to send the necessary anti-submarine craft to this side.

There are at least seventeen more destroyers employed on our Atlantic coast, *where there is no war*, not to mention numerous other very useful anti-submarine craft, including sea-going tugs, etc.

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<sup>1</sup>This was a long document describing conditions in great detail.

Can you not do something to bring our Government to an understanding of how very serious the situation is?

Would it not be well to send another telegram to Mr. Lansing and the President, and also send them the enclosed correspondence?

I am sending this by mail because I may be somewhat delayed in returning to London.

Very sincerely yours,  
WM. S. SIMS.

Page immediately acted on this suggestion.

*Most confidential for the Secretary of State and  
President only*

Sims sends me by special messenger from Queenstown the most alarming reports of the submarine situation which are confirmed by the Admiralty here. He says that the war will be won or lost in this submarine zone within a few months. Time is of the essence of the problem, and anti-submarine craft which cannot be assembled in the submarine zone almost immediately may come too late. There is, therefore, a possibility that this war may become a war between Germany and the United States alone. Help is far more urgently and quickly needed in this submarine zone than anywhere else in the whole war area.

PAGE.

The United States had now been in the war for three months and only twenty-eight of the sixty destroyers which were available had been sent into the field. Yet this latest message of Page produced no effect, and, when Admiral Sims returned from Queenstown, the two men, almost in despair, consulted as to the step which they should take next. What was the matter? Was it that

Washington did not care to get into the naval war with its full strength, or was it that it simply refused to believe the representations of its Admiral and its Ambassador? Admiral Sims and Page went over the whole situation and came to the conclusion that Washington regarded them both as so pro-British that their reports were subject to suspicion. Just as Page had found that the State Department, and its "trade advisers," had believed that the British were using the blockade as a means of destroying American trade for the benefit of Britain, so now he believed that Mr. Daniels and Admiral Benson, the Chief of Naval Operations, evidently thought that Great Britain was attempting to lure American warships into European waters, to undergo the risk of protecting British commerce, while British warships were kept safely in harbour. Page suggested that there was now only one thing left to do, and that was to request the British Government itself to make a statement to President Wilson that would substantiate his own messages.

"Whatever else they think of the British in Washington," he said, "they know one thing—and that is that a British statesman like Mr. Balfour will not lie."

Mr. Balfour by this time had returned from America. The fact that he had established these splendid personal relations with Mr. Wilson, and that he had impressed the American public so deeply with his sincerity and fine purpose, made him especially valuable for this particular appeal. Page and Admiral Sims therefore went to the Foreign Office and laid all the facts before him. Their own statements, Page informed the Foreign Secretary, were evidently regarded as hysterical and biased by an unreasoning friendliness to Great Britain. If Mr. Balfour would say the same things over his own signature, then they would not be disbelieved.



Mr. Balfour gladly consented. He called in Admiral Jellicoe and asked him to draft a despatch, so that all the technical facts would be completely accurate. He also consulted with Sir Edward Carson, the First Lord of the Admiralty. Then Mr. Balfour put the document in its final shape and signed it. It was as follows:

*Mr. Balfour to the President*

June 30, 1917.

The forces at present at the disposal of the British Admiralty are not adequate to protect shipping from submarine attack in the danger zone round the British Islands. Consequently shipping is being sunk at a greater rate than it can be replaced by new tonnage of British origin.

The time will come when, if the present rate of loss continues, the available shipping, apart from American contribution, will be insufficient to bring to this country sufficient foodstuffs and other essentials, including oil fuel. The situation in regard to our Allies, France, and Italy, is much the same.

Consequently, it is absolutely necessary to add to our forces as a first step, pending the adoption or completion of measures which will, it is hoped, eventually lead to the destruction of enemy submarines at a rate sufficient to ensure safety of our sea communications.

The United States is the only allied country in a position to help. The pressing need is for armed small craft of every kind available in the area where commerce concentrates near the British and French coasts. Destroyers, submarines, gunboats, yachts, trawlers, and tugs would all give invaluable help, and if sent in sufficient numbers would undoubtedly save a situation which is manifestly critical. But they are required now and in as great numbers as possible. There is no time for delay.

The present method of submarine attack is almost entirely by torpedo with the submarine submerged. The gun defense of merchant ships keeps the submarine below the surface but does no more; offensively against a submerged submarine it is useless, and the large majority of the ships torpedoed never see the attacking submarine until the torpedo has hit the ship.<sup>1</sup>

The present remedy is, therefore, to prevent the submarine from using its periscope for fear of attack by bomb or ram from small craft, and this method of defense for the shipping and offense against the submarine requires small craft in very large numbers.

The introduction of the convoy system, provided there are sufficient destroyers to form an adequate screen to the convoy, will, it is hoped, minimize losses when it is working, and the provision of new offensive measures is progressing; but for the next few months there is only one safeguard, viz., the immediate addition to patrols of every small vessel that can possibly be sent to European waters.

Page, moreover, kept up his own appeal:

*To the President*

July 5th.

*Strictly confidential to the President and the Secretary*

The British Cabinet is engaging in a threatening controversy about the attitude which they should take toward the submarine peril. There is a faction in the Admiralty which possesses the indisputable facts and which takes

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<sup>1</sup>The Navy Department had taken the position that arming merchantmen was the best protection against the submarine. This statement was intended to refute this belief.

a very disheartening view of the situation. This group insists that the Cabinet should make a confession at least to us of the full extent of the danger and that it should give more information to the public. The public does not feel great alarm simply because it has been kept in too great ignorance. But the political faction is so far the stronger. It attempts to minimize the facts, and, probably for political reasons, it refuses to give these discouraging facts wide publicity. The politicians urge that it is necessary to conceal the full facts from the Germans. They also see great danger in throwing the public into a panic.

Mr. Lloyd George is always optimistic and he is too much inclined to yield his judgment to political motives. In his recent address in Glasgow he gave the public a comforting impression of the situation. But the facts do not warrant the impression which he gave.

This dispute among the political factions is most unfortunate and it may cause an explosion of public feeling at any time. Changes in the Cabinet may come in consequence. If the British public knew all the facts or if the American people knew them, the present British Government would probably fall. It is therefore not only the submarine situation which is full of danger. The political situation is in a dangerous state also.

PAGE.

*To Arthur W. Page*

Wilsford Manor, Salisbury,  
July 8, 1917.

DEAR ARTHUR:

Since admirals and generals began to come from home, they and the war have taken my time so completely, day and night, that I haven't lately written you many things that I should like to tell you. I'll try here—a house of a

friend of ours where the only other guest besides your mother and me is Edward Grey. This is the first time I've seen him since he left office. Let me take certain big subjects in order and come to smaller things later:

1. The German submarines are succeeding to a degree that the public knows nothing about. These two things are true: (a) The Germans are building submarines faster than the English sink them. In this way, therefore, they are steadily gaining. (b) The submarines are sinking freight ships faster than freight ships are being built by the whole world. In this way, too, then, the Germans are succeeding. Now if this goes on long enough, the Allies' game is up. For instance, they have lately sunk so many fuel oil ships, that this country may very soon be in a perilous condition—even the Grand Fleet may not have enough fuel. Of course the chance is that oil ships will not continue to fall victims to the U-boats and we shall get enough through to replenish the stock. But this illustrates the danger, and it is a very grave danger.

The best remedy so far worked out is the destroyer. The submarines avoid destroyers and they sink very, very few ships that are convoyed. If we had destroyers enough to patrol the whole approach (for, say, 250 miles) to England, the safety of the sea would be very greatly increased; and if we had enough to patrol and to convoy every ship going and coming, the damage would be reduced to a minimum. The Admiral and I are trying our best to get our Government to send over 500 improvised destroyers—yachts, ocean-going tugs—any kind of swift craft that can be armed. Five hundred such little boats might end the war in a few months; for the Germans are keeping the spirit of their people and of their army up by their submarine success. If that success were stopped they'd have no other cry half so effective. If they could



see this in Washington as we see it, they'd do it and do it not halfway but with a vengeance. If they don't do it, the war may be indefinitely prolonged and a wholly satisfactory peace may never be made. The submarine is the most formidable thing the war has produced—by far—and it gives the German the only earthly chance he has to win. And he *may* substantially win by it yet. That's what the British conceal. In fact, half of them do not see it or believe it. But nothing is truer, or plainer. One hundred thousand submarine chasers next year may be worth far less than 500 would be worth now, for next year see how few ships may be left! The mere arming of ships is not enough. Nearly all that are sunk are armed. The submarine now carries a little periscope and a big one, each painted the colour of the sea. You can't see a little periscope except in an ocean as smooth as glass. It isn't bigger than a coffee cup. The submarine thus sinks its victims without ever emerging or ever being seen. As things now stand, the Germans are winning the war, and they are winning it on the sea; that's the queer and the most discouraging fact. My own opinion is that all the facts ought to be published to all the world. Let the Germans get all the joy they can out of the confession. No matter, if the Government and the people of the United States knew all the facts, we'd have 1,000 improvised destroyers (yachts, tugs, etc., etc.) armed and over here very quickly. Then the tide would turn.

Then there'd be nothing to fear in the long run. For the military authorities all agree that the German Army is inferior to the British and French and will be whipped. That may take a long time yet; but of the result nobody who knows seems to have any doubt—unless the French get tired and stop. They have periods of great war weariness and there is real danger that they may quit and

make a separate peace. General Pershing's presence has made the situation safe for the moment. But in a little while something else spectacular and hopeful may be required to keep them in line.

Such is an accurate picture of the war as it is now, and it is a dangerous situation.

2. The next grave danger is financial. The European Allies have so bled the English for money that the English would by this time probably have been on a paper money basis (and of course all the Allies as well) if we had not come to their financial aid. And we've got to keep our financial aid going to them to prevent this disastrous result. That wouldn't at once end the war, if they had all abandoned specie payments; but it would be a frightfully severe blow and it might later bring defeat. That is a real danger. And the Government at Washington, I fear, does not know the full extent of the danger. They think that the English are disposed to lie down on them. They don't realize the cost of the war. This Government has bared all this vast skeleton to me; but I fear that Washington imagines that part of it is a deliberate scare. It's a very real danger.

Now, certain detached items:

Sims is the idol of the British Admiralty and he is doing his job just as well as any man could with the tools and the chance that he has. He has made the very best of the chance and he has completely won the confidence and admiration of this side of the world.

Pershing made an admirable impression here, and in France he has simply set them wild with joy. His coming and his little army have been worth what a real army will be worth later. It is well he came to keep the French in line.

The army of doctors and nurses have had a similar effect.

Even the New England saw-mill units have caused a furor of enthusiasm. They came with absolute Yankee completeness of organization—with duplicate parts of all their machinery, tents, cooks, pots, and pans, and everything ship-shape. The only question they asked was: "Say, where the hell are them trees you want sawed up?" That's the way to do a job! Yankee stock is made high here by such things as that.

We're getting a crowd of Yankee lecturers on the United States to go up and down this Kingdom. There's the greatest imaginable curiosity to hear about the United States in all kinds of society from munition workers to universities. I got the British Government to write Buttrick<sup>1</sup> to come as its guest, and the Rockefeller Boards rose to the occasion. He'll probably be along presently. If he hasn't already sailed when you get this, see him and tell him to make arrangements to have pictures sent over to him to illustrate his lectures. Who else could come to do this sort of a job?

I am myself busier than I have ever been. The kind of work the Embassy now has to do is very different from the work of the days of neutrality. It continues to increase—especially the work that I have to do myself. But it's all pleasant now. We are trying to help and no longer to hinder. To save my life I don't see how the Washington crowd can look at themselves in a mirror and keep their faces straight. Yesterday they were bent on sending everything into European neutral states. The foundations of civilization would give way if neutral trade were interfered with. Now, nothing must go in except on a ration basis. Yesterday it must be a peace without victory. Now it must be a complete victory, every man

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<sup>1</sup>Dr. Wallace Buttrick, President of the General Education Board, who was sent at this time to deliver lectures throughout Great Britain on the United States.

and every dollar thrown in, else no peace is worth having. I don't complain. I only rejoice. But I'm glad that kind of a rapid change is not a part of my record. The German was the same beast yesterday that he is to-day; and it makes a simple-minded, straight-minded man like me wonder which attitude was the (or is the) attitude of real conviction. But this doesn't bother me now as a real problem—only as a speculation. What we call History will, I presume, in time work this out. But History is often a kind of lie. But never mind that. The only duty of mankind now is to win. Other things can wait.

I walked over to Stonehenge and back (about six miles) with Lord Grey (Sir Edward, you know) and we, like everybody else, fell to talking about when the war may end. We know as well as anybody and no better than anybody else. I have very different moods about it—no convictions. It seems to me to depend, as things now are, more on the submarines than on anything else. If we could effectually discourage them so that the Germans would have to withdraw them and could no more keep up the spirit of their people by stories of the imminent starvation of England, I have a feeling that the hunger and the war weariness of the German people would lead them to force an end. But, the more they are called on to suffer the more patriotic do they think themselves and they *may* go on till they drop dead in their tracks.

What I am really afraid of is that the Germans may, before winter, offer all that the Western Allies most want—the restoration of Belgium and France, the return of Alsace-Lorraine, etc., in the West and the surrender of the Colonies—provided Austria is not dismembered. That would virtually leave them the chance to work out their Middle Europe scheme and ultimately there'd probably have to be another war over that question. That's the



real eventuality to be feared—a German defeat in the West but a German victory in the Southeast. Everybody in Europe is so war weary that such a plan *may* succeed.

On the other hand, what Hoover and Northcliffe fear may come true—that the Germans are going to keep up the struggle for years—till their armies are practically obliterated, as Lee's army was. If the Allies were actually to kill (not merely wound, but actually kill) 5,000 Germans a day for 300 days a year, it would take about four years to obliterate the whole German Army. There is the bare possibility, therefore, of a long struggle yet. But I can't believe it. My dominant mood these days is an end within a very few months after the submarines are knocked out. Send over, therefore, 1,000 improvised destroyers the next two months, and I'll promise peace by Christmas. Otherwise I can make no promises. That's all that Lord Grey and I know, and surely we are two wise men. What, therefore, is the use in writing any more about this?

The chief necessity that grows upon me is that all the facts must be brought out that show the kinship in blood and ideals of the two great English-speaking nations. We were actually coming to believe ourselves that we were part German and Slovene and Pole and What-not, instead of essentially being Scotch and English. Hence the unspeakable impudence of your German who spoke of eliminating the Anglo-Saxon element from American life! The truth should be forcibly and convincingly told and repeated to the end of the chapter, and our national life should proceed on its natural historic lines, with its proper historic outlook and background. We can do something to bring this about.

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

The labour of getting the American Navy into the war was evidently at first a difficult one, but the determination of Page and Admiral Sims triumphed, and, by August and September, our energies were fully engaged. And the American Navy made a record that will stand everlastingly to its glory. Without its help the German submarines could never have been overcome.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### PAGE—THE MAN

THE entrance of America into the war, followed by the successful promotion of the Balfour visit, brought a period of quiet into Page's life. These events represented for him a personal triumph; there were many things still to be done, it is true, and Page, as always, was active in advancing the interests that were nearest his heart; yet the mighty relief that followed the American declaration was the kind that one experiences after accomplishing the greatest task of a lifetime. Page's letters have contained many references to the sense of moral isolation which his country's policy had forced upon him; he probably exaggerated his feeling that there was a tendency to avoid him; this was merely a reflection of his own inclination to keep away from all but the official people. He now had more leisure and certainly more interest in cultivating the friends that he had made in Great Britain. For the fact is that, during all these engrossing years, Page had been more than an Ambassador; by the time the United States entered the war he had attained an assured personal position in the life of the British capital. He had long since demonstrated his qualifications for a post, which, in the distinction of the men who have occupied it, has few parallels in diplomacy. The scholarly Lowell, the courtly Bayard, the companionable Hay, the ever-humorous Choate, had set a standard for American Ambassadors which had made the place a difficult one for their suc-

cessors. Though Page had characteristics in common with all these men, his personality had its own distinctive tang; and it was something new to the political and social life of London. And the British capital, which is extremely exacting and even merciless in its demands upon its important personages, had found it vastly entertaining. "I didn't know there could be anything so American as Page except Mark Twain," a British literary man once remarked; and it was probably this strong American quality, this directness and even breeziness of speech and of method, this absence of affectation, this almost openly expressed contempt for finesse and even for tradition, combined with those other traits which we like to think of as American—an upright purpose, a desire to serve not only his own country but mankind—which made the British public look upon Page as one of the most attractive and useful figures in a war-torn Europe.

There was a certain ruggedness in Page's exterior which the British regarded as distinctly in keeping with this American flavour. The Ambassador was not a handsome man. To one who had heard much of the liveliness of his conversation and presence a first impression was likely to be disappointing. His figure at this time was tall, gaunt, and lean—and he steadily lost weight during his service in England; his head was finely shaped—it was large, with a high forehead, his thin gray hair rather increasing its intellectual aspect; and his big frank brown eyes reflected that keen zest for life, that unsleeping interest in everything about him, that ever-working intelligence and sympathy which were the man's predominant traits. But a very large nose at first rather lessened the pleasing effects of his other features, and a rather weather-beaten, corrugated face gave a preliminary suggestion of roughness. Yet Page had only to begin talking and the impression immediately



changed. "He puts his mind to yours," Dr. Johnson said, describing the sympathetic qualities of a friend, and the same was true of Page. Half a dozen sentences, spoken in his quick, soft, and ingratiating accents, accompanied by the most genial smile, at once converted the listener into a friend. Few men have ever lived who more quickly responded to this human relationship. The Ambassador, at the simple approach of a human being, became as a man transformed. Tired though he might be, low in spirits as he not infrequently was, the press of a human hand at once changed him into an animated and radiating companion. This responsiveness deceived all his friends in the days of his last illness. His intimates who dropped in to see Page invariably went away much encouraged and spread optimistic reports about his progress. A few minutes' conversation with Page would deceive even his physicians. The explanation was a simple one: the human presence had an electric effect upon him, and it is a revealing sidelight on Page's character that almost any man or woman could produce this result. As an editor, the readiness with which he would listen to suggestions from the humblest source was a constant astonishment to his associates. The office boy had as accessible an approach to Page as had his partners. He never treated an idea, even a grotesque one, with contempt; he always had time to discuss it, to argue it out, and no one ever left his presence thinking that he had made an absurd proposal. Thus Page had a profound respect for a human being simply because he was a human being; the mere fact that a man, woman, or child lived and breathed, had his virtues and his failings, constituted in Page's imagination a tremendous fact. He could not wound such a living creature any more than he could wound a flower or a tree; conse-

quently he treated every person as an important member of the universe. Not infrequently, indeed, he stormed at public men, but his thunder, after all, was not very terrifying; his remarks about such personages as Mr. Bryan merely reflected his indignation at their policies and their influence but did not indicate any feeling against the victims themselves. Page said "Good morning" to his doorman with the same deference that he showed to Sir Edward Grey, and there was not a little stenographer in the building whose joys and sorrows did not arouse in him the most friendly interest. Some of the most affecting letters written about Page, indeed, have come from these daily associates of more humble station. "We so often speak of Mr. Page," writes one of the Embassy staff—"Findlater, Short, and Frederick"—these were all English servants at the Embassy; "we all loved him equally, and hardly a day passes that something does not remind us of him, and I often fancy that I hear his laugh, so full of kindness and love of life." And the impression left on those in high position was the same. "I have seen ladies representing all that is most worldly in Mayfair," writes Mr. Ellery Sedgwick, the editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*, "start at the sudden thought of Page's illness, their eyes glistening with tears."

Perhaps what gave most charm to this human side was the fact that Page was fundamentally such a scholarly man. This was the aspect which especially delighted his English friends. He preached democracy and Americanism with an emphasis that almost suggested the backwoodsman—the many ideas on these subjects that appear in his letters Page never hesitated to set forth with all due resonance at London dinner tables—yet he phrased his creed in language that was little less than literary style, and illuminated it with illustrations and a philosophy

that were the product of the most exhaustive reading. "Your Ambassador has taught us something that we did not know before," an English friend remarked to an American. "That is that a man can be a democrat and a man of culture at the same time." The Greek and Latin authors had been Page's companions from the days when, as the holder of the Greek Fellowship at Johns Hopkins, he had been a favourite pupil of Basil L. Gildersleeve. British statesmen who had been trained at Balliol, in the days when Greek was the indispensable ear-mark of a gentleman, could thus meet their American associate on the most sympathetic terms. Page likewise spoke a brand of idiomatic English which immediately put him in a class by himself. He regarded words as sacred things. He used them, in his writing or in his speech, with the utmost care and discrimination; yet this did not result in a halting or stilted style; he spoke with the utmost ease, going rapidly from thought to thought, choosing invariably the one needful word, lighting up the whole with whimsicalities all his own, occasionally emphasizing a good point by looking downward and glancing over his eyeglasses, perhaps, if he knew his companion intimately, now and then giving him a monitory tap on the knee. Page, in fact, was a great and incessant talker; hardly anything delighted him more than a companionable exchange of ideas and impressions; he was seldom so busy that he would not push aside his papers for a chat; and he would talk with almost any one, on almost any subject—his secretaries, his stenographers, his office boys, and any crank who succeeded in getting by the doorman—for, in spite of his lively warnings against the breed, Page did really love cranks and took a collector's joy in uncovering new types. Page's voice was normally quiet; though he had spent all his early life in the South, the characteristic

Southern accents were ordinarily not observable; yet his intonation had a certain gentleness that was probably an inheritance of his Southern breeding. Thus, when he first began talking, his words would ripple along quietly and rapidly; a characteristic pose was to sit calmly, with one knee thrown over the other, his hands folded; as his interest increased, however, he would get up, perhaps walk across the room, or stand before the fireplace, his hands behind his back; a large cigar, sometimes unlighted, at other times emitting huge clouds of smoke, would oscillate from one side of his mouth to the other; his talk would grow in earnestness, his voice grow louder, his words come faster and faster, until finally they would gush forth in a mighty torrent.

All Page's personal traits are explained by that one characteristic which tempered all others, his sense of humour. That Page was above all a serious-minded man his letters show; yet his spirits were constantly alert for the amusing, the grotesque, and the contradictory; like all men who are really serious and alive to the pathos of existence, he loved a hearty laugh, especially as he found it a relief from the gloom that filled his every waking moment in England. Page himself regarded this ability to smile as an indispensable attribute to a well-rounded life. "No man can be a gentleman," he once declared, "who does not have a sense of humour." Only he who possessed this gift, Page believed, had an imaginative insight into the failings and the virtues of his brothers; only he could have a tolerant attitude toward the stupidities of his fellows, to say nothing of his own. And humour with him assumed various shades; now it would flash in an epigram, or smile indulgently at a passing human weakness; now and then it would break out into genial mockery; occasionally it would manifest itself as sheer



horse-play; and less frequently it would become sardonic or even savage. It was in this latter spirit that he once described a trio of Washington statesmen, whose influence he abhorred as, "three minds that occupy a single vacuum." He once convulsed a Scottish audience by describing the national motto of Scotland—and doing so with a broad burr in his voice that seemed almost to mark the speaker a native to the heath—as "Liber-r-ty, fra-a-ternity and f-r-r-u-gality." The policy of his country occasioned many awkward moments which, thanks to his talent for amiable raillery, he usually succeeded in rendering harmless. Not infrequently Page's fellow guests at the dinner table would think the American attitude toward Germany a not inappropriate topic for small talk. "Mr. Page," remarked an exaltedly titled lady in a conversational pause, "when is your country going to get into the war?" The more discreet members of the company gasped, but Page was not disturbed. "Please give us at least ninety days," he answered, and an exceedingly disagreeable situation was thus relieved by general laughter.

On another occasion his repudiation of this flippant spirit took a more solemn and even more effective form. The time was a few days before the United States had declared war. Bernstorff had been dismissed; events were rapidly rushing toward the great climax; yet the behaviour of the Washington Administration was still inspiring much caustic criticism. The Pages were present at one of the few dinners which they attended in the course of this crisis; certain smart and tactless guests did not seem to regard their presence as a bar to many gibes against the American policy. Page sat through it all impassive, never betraying the slightest resentment.

Presently the ladies withdrew. Page found himself sitting next to Mr. Harold Nicolson, an important official

in the Foreign Office. It so happened that Mr. Nicolson and Page were the only two members of the company who were the possessors of a great secret which made ineffably silly all the chatter that had taken place during the dinner; this was that the United States had decided on war against Germany and would issue the declaration in a few days.

"Well, Mr. Nicolson," said Page, "I think that you and I will drink a glass of wine together."

The two men quietly lifted their glasses and drank the silent toast. Neither made the slightest reference to the forthcoming event. Perhaps the other men present were a little mystified, but in a few days they understood what it had meant, and also learned how effectively they had been rebuked.

"Is it any wonder," says Mr. Nicolson, telling this story, "that I think that Mr. Page is perhaps the greatest gentleman I have ever known? He has only one possible competitor for this distinction—and that is Arthur Balfour."

The English newspapers took delight in printing Page's aphorisms, and several anecdotes that came from America afforded them especial joy. One went back to the days when the Ambassador was editor of the *Atlantic Monthly*. A woman contributor had sent him a story; like most literary novices she believed that editors usually rejected the manuscripts of unknown writers without reading them. She therefore set a trap for Page by pasting together certain sheets. The manuscript came back promptly, and, as the prospective contributor had hoped, these sheets had not been disturbed. These particular sections had certainly not been read. The angry author triumphantly wrote to Page, explaining how she had caught him and denouncing the whole editorial tribe as humbugs. "Dear

Madam," Page immediately wrote in reply, "when I break an egg at breakfast, I do not have to eat the whole of it to find out that it is bad." Page's treatment of authors, however, was by no means so acrimonious as this little note might imply. Indeed, the urbanity and consideration shown in his correspondence with writers had long been a tradition in American letters. The remark of O. Henry in this regard promises to become immortal: "Page could reject a story with a letter that was so complimentary," he said, "and make everybody feel so happy that you could take it to a bank and borrow money on it."

Another anecdote reminiscent of his editorial days was his retort to S. S. McClure, the editor of *McClure's Magazine*.

"Page," said Mr. McClure, "there are only three great editors in the United States."

"Who's the third one, Sam?" asked Page.

Plenty of stories, illustrating Page's quickness and aptness in retort, have gathered about his name in England. Many of them indicate a mere spirit of boyish fun. Early in his Ambassadorship he was spending a few days at Stratford-on-Avon, his hostess being an American woman who had beautifully restored an Elizabethan house; the garden contained a mulberry tree which she liked to think had been planted by Shakespeare himself. The dignitaries of Stratford, learning that the American Ambassador had reached town, asked permission to wait upon him; the Lord Mayor, who headed the procession, made an excellent speech, to which Page appropriately replied, and several hundred people were solemnly presented. After the party had left Page turned to his hostess:

"Have they all gone?"

"Yes."

"All?"

"Yes."

"Are you sure?"

"Yes."

"Then let's take hands and dance around the mulberry tree!"

Page was as good as his word; he danced as gaily as the youngest member of the party, to the singing of the old English song.

The great service in St. Paul's Cathedral, in commemoration of America's entry into the war, has already been described. A number of wounded Americans, boys whose zeal for the Allies had led them to enlist in the Canadian Army, were conspicuous participants in this celebration. After the solemn religious ceremonies, the Ambassador and these young men betook themselves for lunch to a well-known London restaurant. In an interval of the conversation one of the Americans turned to Page.

"Mr. Ambassador, there was just one thing wrong with that service."

"What was that?"

"We wanted to yell, and we couldn't."

"Then why don't you yell now?"

The boy jumped on a chair and began waving his napkin. "The Ambassador says we may yell," he cried. "Let's yell!"

"And so," said Page, telling the story, "they yelled for five minutes and I yelled with them. We all felt better in consequence."

This geniality, this disposition not to take life too solemnly, sometimes lightened up the sombre atmosphere of the Foreign Office itself. "Mr. Balfour went on a sort of mild rampage yesterday," Page records. "The British and American navies had come to an arrangement



whereby the Brazilian ships that are coming over to help us fight should join the American unit, not the British, as was at first proposed. Washington telegraphed me that the British Minister at Rio was blocking the game by standing out for the first British idea—that the Brazilian ships should join the British. It turned out in the conversation that the British Minister had not been informed of the British-American naval arrangement. Mr. Balfour sent for Lord Hardinge. He called in one of the private secretaries. Was such a thing ever heard of?

“‘Did you ever know,’ said the indignant Mr. Balfour, turning to me, ‘of such a thing as a minister not even being informed of his Government’s decisions?’ ‘Yes,’ I said, ‘if I ransack my memory diligently, I think I could find such cases.’ The meeting went into laughter!”

Evidently the troubles which Page was having with his own State Department were not unfamiliar to British officialdom.

Page’s letters sufficiently reveal his fondness for Sir Edward Grey and the splendid relations that existed between them. The sympathetic chords which the two men struck upon their first meeting only grew stronger with time. A single episode brings out the bonds that drew them together. It took place at a time when the tension over the blockade was especially threatening. One afternoon Page asked for a formal interview; he had received another exceedingly disagreeable protest from Washington, with instructions to push the matter to a decision; the Ambassador left his Embassy with a grave expression upon his face; his associates were especially worried over the outcome. So critical did the situation seem that the most important secretaries gathered in the Ambassador’s room, awaiting his return, their nerves

strung almost to the breaking point. An hour went by and nothing was heard from Page; another hour slowly passed and still the Ambassador did not return. The faces of the assembled staff lengthened as the minutes went by; what was the Ambassador doing at the Foreign Office? So protracted an interview could portend only evil; already, in the minds of these nervous young men, ultimatums were flying between the United States and Great Britain, and even war might be hanging in the balance. Another hour drew out its weary length; the room became dark, dinner time was approaching, and still Page failed to make his appearance. At last, when his distracted subordinates were almost prepared to go in search of their chief, the Ambassador walked jauntily in, smiling and apparently carefree. What had happened? What was to be done about the detained ships?

"What ships?" asked Page, and then suddenly he remembered. "Oh, yes—those." That was all right; Sir Edward had at once promised to release them; it had all been settled in a few minutes.

"Then why were you so long?"

The truth came out: Sir Edward and Page had quickly turned from intercepted cargoes to the more congenial subject of Wordsworth, Tennyson, and other favourite poets, and the rest of the afternoon had been consumed in discussing this really important business.

Perhaps Page was not so great a story-teller as many Americans, but he excelled in a type of yarn that especially delights Englishmen, for it is the kind that is native to the American soil. He possessed an inexhaustible stock of Negro anecdotes, and he had the gift of bringing them out at precisely the right point. There was one which the Archbishop of York never tired of repeating. Soon after America entered the war, the Archbishop asked Page how

long his country was "in for." "I can best answer that by telling you a story," said Page. "There were two Negroes who had just been sentenced to prison terms. As they were being taken away in the carriage placed at their disposal by the United States Government, one said to the other, 'Sam, how long is you in fo'?' 'I guess dat it's a yeah or two yeahs,' said Sam. 'How long is you in fo'?' 'I guess it's from now on,' said the other darky." "From now on," remarked the Archbishop, telling this story. "What could more eloquently have described America's attitude toward the war?"

The mention of the Archbishop suggests another of Page's talents—the aptness of his letters of introduction. In the spring of 1918 the Archbishop, at the earnest recommendation of Page and Mr. Balfour, came to the United States. Page prepared the way by letters to several distinguished Americans, of which this one, to Theodore Roosevelt, is a fair sample:

*To Theodore Roosevelt*

London, January 16, 1918.

DEAR MR. ROOSEVELT:

The Archbishop of York goes to the United States to make some observations of us and of our ways and to deliver addresses—on the invitation of some one of our church organizations; a fortunate event for us and, I have ventured to tell him, for him also.

During his brief stay in our country, I wish him to make your acquaintance, and I have given him a card of introduction to you, and thus I humbly serve you both.

The Archbishop is a man and a brother, a humble, learned, earnest, companionable fellow, with most charming manners and an attractive personality, a good friend of

mine, which argues much for him and (I think) implies also something in my behalf. You will enjoy him.

I am, dear Mr. Roosevelt,

Sincerely yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

Greatly as Page loved England he never ceased to preach his Americanism. That he preferred his own country to any other and that he believed that it was its greatest destiny to teach its institutions to the rest of the world, Page's letters show; yet this was with him no cheap spread-eagleism; it was a definite philosophy which the Ambassador had completely thought out. He never hesitated to express his democratic opinions in any company, and only once or twice were there any signs that these ideas jarred a little in certain strongholds of conservatism. Even in the darkest period of American neutrality Page's faith in the American people remained complete. After this country had entered the war and the apparent slowness of the Washington Administration had raised certain questionings, Page never doubted that the people themselves, however irresolute and lukewarm their representatives might be, would force the issue to its only logical end. Even so friendly a man as Mr. Balfour once voiced a popular apprehension that the United States might not get into the war with all its strength or might withdraw prematurely. This was in the early period of our participation. "Who is going to stop the American people and how?" Page quickly replied. "I think that was a good answer," he said, as he looked back at the episode in the summer of 1918, when hundreds of thousands of Americans were landing in France every month. A scrap of his writing records a discussion at a dinner party on this question: "If you could have a month in any



time and any country, what time and what country would you choose?" The majority voted for England in the time of Elizabeth, but Page's preference was for Athens in the days of Pericles. Then came a far more interesting debate: "If you could spend a second lifetime when and where would you choose to spend it?" On this Page had not a moment's hesitation: "In the future and in the U. S. A.!" and he upheld his point with such persuasive-ness that he carried the whole gathering with him. His love of anything suggesting America came out on all occasions. One of his English hostesses once captivated him by serving corn bread at a luncheon. "The American Ambassador and corn bread!" he exclaimed with all the delight of a schoolboy. Again he was invited, with another distinguished American, to serve as godfather at the christening of the daughter of an American woman who had married an Englishman. When the ceremony was finished he leaned over the font toward his fellow godfather. "Born on July 4th," he exclaimed, "of an American mother! And we two Yankee godfathers! We'll see that this child is taught the Constitution of the United States!"

One day an American duchess came into Page's office. "I am going home for a little visit and I want a passport," she said.

"But you don't get a passport here," Page replied. "You must go to the Foreign Office."

His visitor was indignant.

"Not at all," she answered. "I am an American: you know that I am; you knew my father. I want an American passport."

Page patiently explained the citizenship and naturalization laws and finally convinced his caller that she was now a British subject and must have a British passport. As

this American duchess left the room he shook at her a menacing forefinger.

"Don't tell me," was the Ambassador's parting shot, "that you thought that you could have your Duke and Uncle Sam, too!"

The judgments which Page passed on men and things were quick and they were not infrequently wise. One of these judgments had historic consequences the end of which cannot even yet be foreseen. On the outbreak of hostilities, as already related, an American Relief Committee was organized in London to look out for the interests of stranded Americans. Page kept a close eye on its operations, and soon his attention was attracted by the noiseless efficiency of an American engineer of whom he had already caught a few fleeting glimpses in the period of peace. After he had finished his work with the American Committee, Mr. Herbert C. Hoover began to make his arrangements to leave for the United States. His private affairs had been disorganized; he had already sent his family home, and his one ambition was to get on the first ship sailing for the United States. The idea of Belgian relief, or of feeding starving people anywhere, had never occurred to him. At this moment an American, Mr. Millard K. Shaler, came from Brussels and gave the most harrowing account of conditions in Belgium. Mr. Hoover took Mr. Shaler to Page, who immediately became sympathetic. The Ambassador arranged an interview between Mr. Hoover and Sir Edward Grey, who likewise showed great interest and promised government support. Soon afterward three Belgians arrived and described the situation as immediately alarming: Brussels had only food enough to feed the people for thirty-six hours; after that, unless help were forthcoming, the greatest distress would set in. Five men—Page, the

three Belgians, and Mr. Hoover—at once got together at the American Embassy. Upon the result of that meeting hung the fate of millions of people. Who before had ever undertaken a scheme for feeding an entire nation for an indefinite period? That there were great obstacles in the way all five men knew; the British Admiralty in particular were strongly opposed; there was a fear that the food, if it could be acquired and sent to Belgium, would find its way to the German Army. Unless the British Government could be persuaded that this could be prevented, the enterprise would fail at the start. How could it be done?

“There is only one way,” said Page. “Some government must give its guarantee that this food will get to the Belgian people.” “And, of course,” he added, “there is only one government that can do that. It must be the American Government.”

Mr. Hoover pointed out that any such guarantee involved the management of transportation; only by controlling the railroads could the American Government make sure that this food would reach its destination.

And that, added Page, involved a director—some one man who could take charge of the whole enterprise. Who should it be?

Then Page turned quickly to the young American.

“Hoover, you’re It!”

Mr. Hoover made no reply; he neither accepted nor rejected the proposal. He merely glanced at the clock, then got up and silently left the room. In a few minutes he returned and entered again into the discussion.

“Hoover, why did you get up and leave us so abruptly?” asked Page, a little puzzled over this behaviour.

"I saw by the clock," came the answer—and it was a story that Page was fond of telling, as illustrating the rapidity with which Mr. Hoover worked—"that there was an hour left before the Exchange closed in New York. So I went out and cabled, buying several millions of bushels of wheat—for the Belgians, of course."

For what is usually known as "society" Page had little inclination. Yet for social intercourse on a more genuine plane he had real gifts. Had he enjoyed better health, week ends in the country would have afforded him welcome entertainment. He also liked dinner parties but indulged in them very moderately. He was a member of many London clubs but he seldom visited any of them. There were a number of organizations, however, which he regularly attended. The Society of Dilettanti, a company of distinguished men interested in promoting the arts and improving the public taste, which has been continuously in existence since 1736, enrolling in each generation the greatest painters and writers of the time, elected Page to membership. He greatly enjoyed its dinners in the Banquet Hall of the Grafton Gallery. "Last night," he writes, describing his initial appearance, "I attended my first Dilettanti dinner and was inducted, much as a new Peer is inducted into the House of Lords. Lord Mersey in the chair—in a red robe. These gay old dogs have had a fine time of it for nearly 200 years—good wine, high food, fine satisfaction. The oldest dining society in the Kingdom. The blue blood old Briton has the art of enjoying himself reduced to a very fine point indeed." Another gathering whose meetings he seldom missed was that of the Kinsmen, an informal club of literary men who met occasionally for food and converse in the Trocadero Restaurant. Here Page would meet such congenial



souls as Sir James Barrie and Sir Arthur Pinero, all of whom retain lively memories of Page at these gatherings. "He was one of the most lovable characters I have ever had the good fortune to encounter," says Sir Arthur Pinero, recalling these occasions. "In what special quality or qualities lay the secret of his charm and influence? Surely in his simplicity and transparent honesty, and in the possession of a disposition which, without the smallest loss of dignity, was responsive and affectionate. Distinguished American Ambassadors will come and go, and will in their turn win esteem and admiration. But none, I venture to say, will efface the recollection of Walter Page from the minds of those who were privileged to gain his friendship."

One aspect of Page that remains fixed in the memory of his associates is his unwearied industry with the pen. His official communications and his ordinary correspondence Page dictated; but his personal letters he wrote with his own hand. He himself deplored the stenographer as a deterrent to good writing; the habit of dictating, he argued, led to wordiness and general looseness of thought. Practically all the letters published in these volumes were therefore the painstaking work of Page's own pen. His handwriting was so beautiful and clear that, in his editorial days, the printers much preferred it as "copy" to typewritten matter. This habit is especially surprising in view of the Ambassador's enormous epistolary output. It must be remembered that the letters included in the present book are only a selection from the vast number that he wrote during his five years in England; many of these letters fill twenty and thirty pages of script; the labour involved in turning them out; day after day, seems fairly astounding. Yet with Page this was a labour of love. All through his Ambassador-

ship he seemed hardly contented unless he had a pen in his hand. As his secretaries would glance into his room, there they would see the Ambassador bending over his desk—writing, writing, eternally writing; sometimes he would call them in, and read what he had written, never hesitating to tear up the paper if their unfavourable criticisms seemed to him well taken. The Ambassador kept a desk also in his bedroom, and here his most important correspondence was attended to. Page's all-night self-communings before his wood fire have already been described, and he had another nocturnal occupation that was similarly absorbing. Many a night, after returning late from his office or from dinner, he would put on his dressing gown, sit at his bedroom desk, and start pouring forth his inmost thoughts in letters to the President, Colonel House, or some other correspondent. His pen flew over the paper with the utmost rapidity and the Ambassador would sometimes keep at his writing until two or three o'clock in the morning. There is a frequently expressed fear that letter writing is an art of the past; that the intervention of the stenographer has destroyed its spontaneity; yet it is evident that in Page the present generation has a letter writer of the old-fashioned kind, for he did all his writing with his own hand and under circumstances that would assure the utmost freshness and vividness to the result.

An occasional game of golf, which he played badly, a trip now and then to rural England—these were Page's only relaxations from his duties. Though he was not especially fond of leaving his own house, he was always delighted when visitors came to him. And the American Embassy, during the five years from 1913 to 1918, extended a hospitality which was fittingly democratic in its quality but which gradually drew within its doors

all that was finest in the intellect and character of England. Page himself attributed the popularity of his house to his wife. Mrs. Page certainly embodied the traits most desirable in the Ambassadors of a great Republic. A woman of cultivation, a tireless reader, a close observer of people and events and a shrewd commentator upon them, she also had an unobtrusive dignity, a penetrating sympathy, and a capacity for human association, which, while more restrained and more placid than that of her husband, made her a helpful companion for a sorely burdened man. The American Embassy under Mr. and Mrs. Page was not one of London's smart houses as that word is commonly understood in this great capital. But No. 6 Grosvenor Square, in the spaciousness of its rooms, the simple beauty of its furnishings, and especially in its complete absence of ostentation, made it the worthy abiding place of an American Ambassador. And the people who congregated there were precisely the kind that appeal to the educated American. "I didn't know I was getting into an assembly of immortals," exclaimed Mr. Hugh Wallace, when he dropped in one Thursday afternoon for tea, and found himself foregathered with Sir Edward Grey, Henry James, John Sargent, and other men of the same type. It was this kind of person who most naturally gravitated to the Page establishment, not the ultra-fashionable, the merely rich, or the many titled. The formal functions which the position demanded the Pages scrupulously gave; but the affairs which Page most enjoyed and which have left the most lasting remembrances upon his guests were the informal meetings with his chosen favourites, for the most part literary men. Here Page's sheer brilliancy of conversation showed at its best. Lord Bryce, Sir John Simon, John Morley, the inevitable companions, Henry James

and John Sargent—"What things have I seen done at the Mermaid"; and certainly these gatherings of wits and savants furnished as near an approach to its Elizabethan prototype as London could then present.

Besides his official activities Page performed great services to the two countries by his speeches. The demands of this kind on an American Ambassador are always numerous, but Page's position was an exceptional one; it was his fortune to represent America at a time when his own country and Great Britain were allies in a great war. He could therefore have spent practically all his time in speaking had he been so disposed. Of the hundreds of invitations received he was able to accept only a few, but most of these occasions became memorable ones. In any spectacular sense Page was not an orator; he rather despised the grand manner, with its flourishes and its tricks; the name of public speaker probably best describes his talents on the platform. Here his style was earnest and conversational: his speech flowed with the utmost readiness; it was invariably quiet and restrained; he was never aiming at big effects, but his words always went home. Of the series of speeches that stand to his credit in England probably the one that will be longest remembered is that delivered at Plymouth on August 4, 1917, the third anniversary of the war. This not only reviewed the common history of the two nations for three hundred years, and suggested a programme for making the bonds tighter yet, but it brought the British public practical assurances as to America's intentions in the conflict. Up to that time there had been much vagueness and doubt; no official voice had spoken the clear word for the United States; the British public did not know what to expect from their kinsmen overseas. But after Page's Plymouth speech the people of Great Britain looked forward with



complete confidence to the coöperation of the two countries and to the inevitable triumph of this coöperation.

*To Arthur W. Page*

Knebworth House, Knebworth,  
August 11, 1917.

DEAR ARTHUR:

First of all, these three years have made me tired. I suppose there's no doubt about that, if there were any scientific way of measuring it. While of course the strain now is nothing like what it was during the days of neutrality, there's yet some strain.

I went down to Plymouth to make a speech on the anniversary of the beginning of the war—went to tell them in the west of England something about relations with the United States and something about what the United States is doing in the war. It turned out to be a great success. The Mayor met me at the train; there was a military company, the Star Spangled Banner and real American applause. All the way through the town the streets were lined with all the inhabitants and more—apparently millions of 'em. They made the most of it for five solid days.

On the morning of August 4th the Mayor gave me an official luncheon. Thence we went to the esplanade facing the sea, where soldiers and sailors were lined up for half a mile. The American Flag was flung loose, the Star Spangled Banner broke forth from the band, and all the people in that part of the world were there gathered to see the show. After all this salute the Mayor took me to the stand and he and I made speeches, and the background was a group of dozens of admirals and generals and many smaller fry. Then I reviewed the troops; then they marched by me and in an hour or two the show was over.

Then the bowling club—the same club and the same green as when Drake left the game to sail out to meet the Armada.

Then a solemn service in the big church, where the prayers were written and the hymns selected with reference to our part in the war.

Then, of course, a dinner party. At eight o'clock at night, the Guildhall, an enormous town hall, was packed with people and I made my speech at 'em. A copy (somewhat less good than the version I gave them) goes to you, along with a leader from the *Times*. They were vociferously grateful for any assuring word about the United States. It's strange how very little the provincial Englander knows about what we have done and mean to do. They took the speech finely, and I have had good letters about it from all sorts of people in every part of the Kingdom.

Then followed five days of luncheons and dinners and garden parties—and (what I set out to say) I got back to London last night dead tired. To-day your mother and I came here—about twenty-five miles from London—for a fortnight.

This is Bulwer-Lytton's house—a fine old English place hired this year by Lady Strafford, whom your mother is visiting for a fortnight or more, and they let me come along, too. They have given me the big library, as good a room as I want—with as bad pens as they can find in the Kingdom.

Your mother is tired, too. Since the American Red Cross was organized here, she has added to her committee and hospitals. But she keeps well and very vigorous. A fortnight here will set her up. She enjoyed Plymouth very much in spite of the continual rush, and it was a rush.

What the United States is doing looks good and large at

this distance. The gratitude here is unbounded; but I detect a feeling here and there of wonder whether we are going to keep up this activity to the end.

I sometimes feel that the German collapse *may* come next winter. Their internal troubles and the lack of sufficient food and raw materials do increase. The breaking point may be reached before another summer. I wish I could prove it or even certainly predict it. But it is at least conceivable. Alas, no one can *prove* anything about the war. The conditions have no precedents. The sum of human misery and suffering is simply incalculable, as is the loss of life; and the gradual and general brutalization goes on and on and on far past any preceding horrors.

With all my love to you and Mollie and the trio,

W. H. P.

And so for five busy and devastating years Page did his work. The stupidities of Washington might drive him to desperation, ill-health might increase his periods of despondency, the misunderstandings that he occasionally had with the British Government might add to his discouragements, but a naturally optimistic and humorous temperament overcame all obstacles, and did its part in bringing about that united effort which ended in victory. And that it was a great part, the story of his Ambassadorship abundantly proves. Page was not the soldier working in the blood and slime of Flanders, nor the sea fighter spending day and night around the foggy coast of Ireland, nor the statesman bending parliaments to his will and manipulating nations and peoples in the mighty game whose stake was civilization itself. But history will indeed be ungrateful if it ever forget the gaunt and pensive figure, clad in a dressing gown, sitting long into the morn-

ing before the smouldering fire at 6 Grosvenor Square, seeking to find some way to persuade a reluctant and hesitating President to lead his country in the defense of liberty and determined that, so far as he could accomplish it, the nation should play a part in the great assize that was in keeping with its traditions and its instincts.



## CHAPTER XXIV

### A RESPITE AT ST. IVES

*To Edward M. House*

Knebworth House

Sunday, September, [sic] 1917.

DEAR HOUSE:

. . . By far the most important peace plan or utterance is the President's extraordinary answer to the Pope.<sup>1</sup> His flat and convincing refusal to take the word of the present rulers of Germany as of any value has had more effect here than any other utterance and it is, so far, the best contribution we have made to the war. The best evidence that I can get shows also that it has had more effect in Germany than anything else that has been said by anybody. That hit the bull's-eye with perfect accuracy; and it has been accepted here as *the* war aim and *the* war condition. So far as I can make out it is working in Germany toward peace with more effect than any other deliverance made by anybody. And it steadied the already unshakable resolution here amazingly.

I can get any information here of course without danger of the slightest publicity—an important point, because even the mention of peace now is dangerous. All the world, under this long strain, is more or less off the normal,

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<sup>1</sup>On August 1, 1917, Pope Benedict XV sent a letter to the Powers urging them to bring the war to an end and outlining possible terms of settlement. On August 29th President Wilson sent his historic reply. This declared, in memorable language, that the Hohenzollern dynasty was unworthy of confidence and that the United States would have no negotiations with its representatives. It inferentially took the stand that the Kaiser must abdicate, or be deposed, and the German autocracy destroyed, as part of the conditions of peace.

and all my work—even routine work—is done with the profoundest secrecy: it has to be.

Our energetic war preparations call forth universal admiration and gratitude here on all sides and nerve up the British and hearten them more than I know how to explain. There is an eager and even pathetic curiosity to hear all the details, to hear, in fact, anything about the United States; and what the British do not know about the United States would fill the British Museum. They do know, however, that they would soon have been obliged to make an unsatisfactory peace if we hadn't come in when we did and they freely say so. The little feeling of jealousy that we should come in and win the war at the end has, I think, been forgotten, swallowed up in their genuine gratitude.

Sincerely yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

*To Arthur W. Page*

American Embassy,  
London, Sept. 3, 1917.

DEAR ARTHUR:

. . . The President has sent Admiral Mayo over to study the naval situation. So far as I can learn the feeling at Washington is that the British Navy has done nothing. Why, it hasn't attacked the German naval bases and destroyed the German navy and ended the war! Why not? I have a feeling that Mayo will supplement and support Sims in his report. Then gradually the naval men at Washington may begin to understand and they may get the important facts into the President's head. Meantime the submarine work of the Germans continues to win the war, although the government and the people here and in the United States appear not to believe it.

They are still destroying seventy-five British ships a month besides an additional (smaller) number of allied and neutral ships. And all the world together is not turning out seventy-five ships a month; nor are we all destroying submarines as fast as the Germans are turning *them* out. Yet all the politicians are putting on a cheerful countenance about it because the Germans are not starving England out and are not just now sinking passenger ships. They may begin this again at any time. They have come within a few feet of torpedoing two of our American liners. The submarine *is* the war yet, but nobody seems disposed to believe it. They'll probably wake up with a great shock some day—or the war may possibly end before the destruction of ships becomes positively fatal.

The President's letter to the Pope gives him the moral and actual leadership now. The Hohenzollerns must go. Somehow the subjects and governments of these Old World kingdoms have not hitherto laid emphasis on this. There's still a divinity that doth hedge a king in most European minds. To me this is the very queerest thing in the whole world. What again if Germany, Austria, Spain should follow Russia? Whether they do or not crowns will not henceforth be so popular. There is an unbounded enthusiasm here for the President's letter and for the President in general.

In spite of certain details which it seems impossible to make understood on the Potomac, the whole American preparation and enthusiasm seem from this distance to be very fine. The *people* seem in earnest. When I read about tax bills, about the food regulation and a thousand other such things, I am greatly gratified. And it proves that we were right when we said that during the days of neutrality the people were held back. It all looks

exceedingly good from this distance, and it makes me homesick.

*To Frank N. Doubleday*

American Embassy.

[Undated, but written about October 1, 1917]

DEAR EFFENDI:

. . . The enormous war work and war help that everybody seems to be doing in the United States is heartily appreciated here—most heartily. The English eat out of our hands. You can see American uniforms every day in London. Every ship brings them. Everybody's thrilled to see them. The Americans here have great houses opened as officers' clubs, and scrumptious huts for men where countesses and other high ladies hand out sandwiches and serve ice cream and ginger beer. Our two admirals are most popular with all classes, from royalty down. English soldiers salute our officers in the street and old gentlemen take off their hats when they meet nurses with the American Red Cross uniform. My Embassy now occupies four buildings for offices, more than half of them military and naval. And my own staff, proper, is the biggest in the world and keeps growing. When I go, in a little while, to receive the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh, I shall carry an Admiral or a General as my aide!

That's the way we keep a stiff upper lip.

And Good Lord! it's tiresome. Peace? We'd all give our lives for the right sort of peace, and never move an eyelid. But only the wrong sort has yet come within reach. The other sort is coming, however; for these present German contortions are the beginning of the end. But the weariness of it, and the tragedy and the cost. No human creature was ever as tired as I am. Yet I keep well and keep going and keep working all my waking



hours. When it ends, I shall collapse and go home and have to rest a while. So at least I feel now. And, if I outlive the work and the danger and the weariness, I'll praise God for that. And it doesn't let up a single day. And I'm no worse off than everybody else.

So this over-weary world goes, dear Effendi; but the longest day shades at last down to twilight and rest; and so this will be. And poor old Europe will then not be worth while for the rest of our lives—a vast grave and ruin where unmated women will mourn and starvation will remain for years to come.

God bless us.

Sincerely yours, with my love to all the boys,

W. H. P.

*To Frank N. Doubleday*

London, November 9, 1917.

DEAR EFFENDI:

. . . This infernal thing drags its slow length along so that we cannot see even a day ahead, not to say a week, or a year. If any man here allowed the horrors of it to dwell on his mind he would go mad, so we have to skip over these things somewhat lightly and try to keep the long, definite aim in our thoughts and to work away distracted as little as possible by the butchery and by the starvation that is making this side of the world a shambles and a wilderness. There is hardly a country on the Continent where people are not literally starving to death, and in many of them by hundreds of thousands; and this state of things is going to continue for a good many years after the war. God knows we (I mean the American people) are doing everything we can to alleviate it but there is so much more to be done than any group of forces can possibly do, that I have a feeling that we have hardly

touched the borders of the great problem itself. Of course here in London we are away from all that. In spite of the rations we get quite enough to eat and it's as good as it is usually in England, but we have no right to complain. Of course we are subject to air raids, and the wise air people here think that early next spring we are going to be bombarded with thousands of aeroplanes, and with new kinds of bombs and gases in a well-organized effort to try actually to destroy London. Possibly that will come; we must simply take our chance, every man sticking to his job. Already the slate shingles on my roof have been broken, and bricks have been knocked down my chimney; the skylight was hit and glass fell down all through the halls, and the nose of a shrapnel shell, weighing eight pounds, fell just in front of my doorway and rolled in my area. This is the sort of thing we incidentally get, not of course from the enemy directly, but from the British guns in London which shoot these things at German aeroplanes. What goes up must come down. Between our own defences and the enemy, God knows which will kill us first!

In spite of all this I put my innocent head on my pillow every night and get a good night's sleep after the bombing is done, and I thank Heaven that nothing interrupts my sleep. This, and a little walking, which is all I get time to do in these foggy days, constitute my life outdoors and precious little of it is outdoors.

Then on every block that I know of in London there is a hospital or supply place and the ambulances are bringing the poor fellows in all the time. We don't get any gasoline to ride so we have to walk. We don't get any white bread so we have to eat stuff made of flour and corn meal ground so fine that it isn't good. While everybody gets a little thinner, the universal opinion is that they also get a little better, and nobody is going to die here of hunger.

We feel a little more cheerful about the submarines than we did some time ago. For some reason they are not getting so many ships. One reason, I am glad to believe, is that they are getting caught themselves. If I could remember all the stories that I hear of good fighting with the submarines I could keep you up two nights when I get home, but in these days one big thing after another crowds so in men's minds that the Lord knows if, when I get home, I shall remember anything.

Always heartily yours,

W. H. P.

*To the President*

London, December 3, 1917.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

. . . Some of the British military men in London are not hopeful of an early end of the war nor even cheerful about the result. They are afraid of the war-weariness that overcame Russia and gave Italy a setback. They say the military task, though long and slow and hard, can be done if everybody will pull together and keep at the job without weariness—*be done by our help*. But they have fits of fear of France. They are discouraged by the greater part of Lord Lansdowne's letter.<sup>1</sup> I myself do not set great value on this military feeling in London, for the British generals in France do not share it. Lord French once said to me and General Robertson, too, that when they feel despondent in London, they go to the front and get cheered up. But it does seem to be a long job. Evidently the Germans mean to fight to the last man

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<sup>1</sup>On November 29, 1917, the London *Daily Telegraph* published a letter from the Marquis of Lansdowne, which declared that the war had lasted too long and suggested that the British restate their war aims. This letter was severely condemned by the British press and by practically all representative British statesmen. It produced a most lamentable impression in the United States also.

unless they can succeed in inducing the Allies to meet them to talk it over without naming their terms in advance. That is what Lord Lansdowne favours, and no public out-giving by any prominent man in England has called forth such a storm of protest since the war began. I think I see the genesis of his thought, and it is this: there is nothing in his letter and there was nothing in the half dozen or more rather long conversations that I have had with him on other subjects to show that he has the slightest conception of democracy as a social creed or as a political system. He is, I think, the most complete aristocrat that I have ever met. He doesn't see the war at all as a struggle between democracy and its opposite. He sees it merely as a struggle between Germany and the Allies; and inferentially he is perfectly willing the Kaiser should remain in power. He is of course a patriotic man and a man of great cultivation. But he doesn't see the deeper meaning of the conflict. Add to this defect of understanding, a long period of bad health and a lasting depression because of the loss of his son, and his call to the war-weary ceases to be a surprise.

I am, dear Mr. President,

Sincerely yours,

WALTER H. PAGE.

*To Arthur W. Page*

American Embassy,

London, December 23, 1917.

DEAR ARTHUR:

I sent you a Christmas cable yesterday for everybody. That's about all I can send in these days of slow mail and restricted shipping and enormously high prices; and you gave all the girls each \$100 for me, for the babies and themselves? That'll show 'em that at least we haven't for-



gotten them. Forgotten? Your mother and I are always talking of the glad day when we can go home and live among them. We get as homesick as small boys their first month at a boarding school. Do you remember the day I left you at Lawrenceville, a forlorn and lonely kid?—It's like that.

A wave of depression hangs over the land like a London fog. And everybody on this tired-out side of the world shows a disposition to lean too heavily on us—to depend on us so completely that the fear arises that they may unconsciously relax their own utmost efforts when we begin to fight. Yet they can't in the least afford to relax, and, when the time comes, I dare say they will not. Yet the plain truth is, the French may give out next year for lack of men. I do not mean that they will quit, but that their fighting strength will have passed its maximum and that they will be able to play only a sort of second part. Except the British and the French, there's no nation in Europe worth a tinker's damn when you come to the real scratch. The whole continent is rotten or tyrannical or yellow-dog. I wouldn't give Long Island or Moore County for the whole of continental Europe, with its kings and itching palms.

. . . Waves of depression and of hope—if not of elation—come and go. I am told, and I think truly, that waves of weariness come in London far oftener and more depressingly than anywhere else in the Kingdom. There is no sign nor fear that the British will give up; they'll hold on till the end. Winston Churchill said to me last night: "We can hold on till next year. But after 1918, it'll be your fight. We'll have to depend on you." I told him that such a remark might well be accepted in some quarters as a British surrender. Then he came up to the scratch: "Surrender? Never." But I fear we need—in

some practical and non-ostentatious way—now and then to remind all these European folk that we get no particular encouragement by being unduly leaned on.

It is, however, the weariest Christmas in all British annals, certainly since the Napoleonic wars. The untoward event after the British advance toward Cambrai caused the retirement of six British generals and deepened the depression here. Still I can see it now passing. Even a little victory will bring back a wave of cheerfulness.

Depression or elation show equally the undue strain that British nerves are under. I dare say nobody is entirely normal. News of many sorts can now be circulated only by word of mouth. The queerest stories are whispered about and find at least temporary credence. For instance: The report has been going around that the revolution that took place in Portugal the other day was caused by the Germans (likely enough); that it was a monarchical movement and that the Germans were going to put the King back on the throne as soon as the war ended. Sensation-mongers appear at every old-woman's knitting circle. And all this has an effect on conduct. Two young wives of noble officers now in France have just run away with two other young noblemen—to the scandal of a large part of good society in London. It is universally said that the morals of more hitherto good people are wrecked by the strain put upon women by the absence of their husbands than was ever before heard of. Everybody is overworked. Fewer people are literally truthful than ever before. Men and women break down and fall out of working ranks continuously. The number of men in the government who have disappeared from public view is amazing, the number that would like to disappear is still greater—from sheer overstrain. The Prime Minister is tired. Bonar Law in a long conference that Crosby

and I had with him yesterday wearily ran all round a circle rather than hit a plain proposition with a clear decision. Mr. Balfour has kept his house from overwork a few days every recent week. I lunched with Mr. Asquith yesterday; even he seemed jaded; and Mrs. Asquith assured me that "everything is going to the devil damned fast." Some conspicuous men who have always been sober have taken to drink. The very few public dinners that are held are served with ostentatious meagreness to escape criticism. I attended one last week at which there was no bread, no butter, no sugar served. All of which doesn't mean that the world here is going to the bad—only that it moves backward and forward by emotions; and this is normally a most unemotional race. Overwork and the loss of sons and friends—the list of the lost grows—always make an abnormal strain. The churches are fuller than ever before. So, too, are the "parlours" of the fortune-tellers. So also the theatres—in the effort to forget one's self. There are afternoon dances for young officers at home on leave: the curtains are drawn and the music is muffled. More marriages take place—blind and maimed, as well as the young fellows just going to France—than were ever celebrated in any year within men's memory. Verse-writing is rampant. I have received enough odes and sonnets celebrating the Great Republic and the Great President to fill a folio volume. Several American Y. M. C. A. workers lately turned rampant Pacifists and had to be sent home. Colonial soldiers and now and then an American sailor turn up at our Y. M. C. A. huts as full as a goat and swear after the event that they never did such a thing before. Emotions and strain everywhere!

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

In March Page, a very weary man—as these letters indicate—took a brief holiday at St. Ives, on the coast of Cornwall. As he gazed out on the Atlantic, the yearning for home, for the sandhills and the pine trees of North Carolina, again took possession of his soul. Yet it is evident, from a miscellaneous group of letters written at this time, that his mind revelled in a variety of subjects, ranging all the way from British food and vegetables to the settlement of the war and from secret diplomacy to literary style.

*To Mrs. Charles G. Loring*

St. Ives, Cornwall, March 3, 1918.

DEAR KITTY:

Your mother of course needed a rest away from London after the influenza got done with her; and I discovered that I had gone stale. So she and I and the golf clubs came here yesterday—as near to the sunlit land of Uncle Sam as you can well get on this island. We look across the ocean—at least out into it—in your direction, but I must confess that Labrador is not in sight. The place is all right, the hotel uncommonly good, but it's Greenlandish in its temperature—a very cold wind blowing. The golf clubs lean up against the wall and curse the weather. But we are away from the hordes of people and will have a little quiet here. It's as quiet as any far-off place by the sea, and it's clean. London is the dirtiest town in the world.

By the way that picture of Chud came (by Col. Honey) along with Alice Page's adorable little photograph. As for the wee chick, I see how you are already beginning to get a lot of fun with her. And you'll have more and more as she gets bigger. Give her my love and see what she'll say. You won't get so lonesome, dear Kitty, with



little Alice; and I can't keep from thinking as well as hoping that the war will not go on as long as it sometimes seems that it must. The utter collapse of Russia has given Germany a vast victory on that side and it may turn out that this will make an earlier peace possible than would otherwise have come. And the Germans may be—in fact, *must* be, very short of some of the essentials of war in their metals or in cotton. They are in a worse internal plight than has been made known, I am sure. I can't keep from hoping that peace may come this year. Of course, my guess may be wrong; but everything I hear points in the direction of my timid prediction.

Bless you and little Alice,

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

Page's oldest son was building a house and laying out a garden at Pinehurst, North Carolina, a fact which explains the horticultural and gastronomical suggestions contained in the following letter:

*To Ralph W. Page*

Tregenna Castle Hotel,  
St. Ives, Cornwall, England,  
March 4, 1918.

DEAR RALPH:

Asparagus

Celery

Tomatoes

Butter Beans

Peas

Sweet Corn

Sweet Potatoes

Squash—the sort you cook in the rind

Cantaloupe

Peanuts

Egg Plant

Figs

Peaches

Pecans

Scuppernongs

Peanut-bacon, in glass jars

Razor-back hams, divinely cured

Raspberries

Strawberries

etc. etc. etc. etc.

You see, having starved here for five years, my mind, as soon as it gets free, runs on these things and my mouth waters. All the foregoing things that grow can be put up in pretty glass jars, too.

Add cream, fresh butter, buttermilk, fresh eggs. Only one of all the things on page one grows with any flavour here at all—strawberries; and only one or two more grow at all. Darned if I don't have to confront Cabbage every day. I haven't yet surrendered, and I never shall unless the Germans get us. Cabbage and Germans belong together: God made 'em both the same stinking day.

Now get a bang-up gardener no matter what he costs. Get him started. Put it up to him to start toward the foregoing programme, to be reached in (say) three years—two if possible. He must learn to grow these things absolutely better than they are now grown anywhere on earth. He must get the best seed. He must get muck out of the swamp, manure from somewhere, etc. etc. He must have the supreme flavour in each thing. Let him take room enough for each—plenty of room. He doesn't

want much room for any one thing, but good spaces between.

This will be the making of the world. Talk about fairs? If he fails to get every prize he must pay a fine for every one that goes to anybody else.

How we'll live! I can live on these things and nothing else. But (just to match this home outfit) I'll order tea from Japan, ripe olives from California, grape fruit and oranges from Florida. Then poor folks will hang around, hoping to be invited to dinner!

Plant a few fig trees now; and pecans? Any good?

The world is going to come pretty close to starvation not only during the war but for five or perhaps ten years afterward. An acre or two *done right*—divinely right—will save us. An acre or two on my land in Moore County—no king can live half so well if the ground be got ready this spring and such a start made as one natural-born gardener can make. The old Russian I had in Garden City was no slouch. Do you remember his little patch back of the house? That far, far, far excelled anything in all Europe. And you'll recall that we jarred 'em and had good things all winter.

This St. Ives is the finest spot in England that I've ever seen. To-day has been as good as any March day you ever had in North Carolina—a fine air, clear sunshine, a beautiful sea—looking out toward the United States; and this country grows—the best golf links that I've ever seen in the world, and nothing else worth speaking of but—tin. Tin mines are all about here. Tin and golf are good crops in their way, but they don't feed the belly of man. As matters stand the only people that have fit things to eat now in all Europe are the American troops in France, and their food comes out of tins chiefly. Ach! Heaven! In these islands man is amphibious and car-

nivorous. It rains every day and meat, meat, meat is the only human idea of food. God bless us, one acre of the Sandhills is worth a vast estate of tin mines and golf links to feed the innards of

Yours affectionately,

W. H. P.

P. S. And cornfield peas, of just the right rankness, cooked with just the right dryness.

When I become a citizen of the Sandhills I propose to induce some benevolent lover of good food to give substantial prizes to the best grower of each of these things and to the best cook of each and to the person who serves each of them most daintily.

We can can and glass jar these things and let none be put on the market without the approval of an expert employed by the community. Then we can get a reputation for Sandhill Food and charge double price.

W. H. P.

*To Arthur W. Page*

St. Ives, Cornwall,  
England, March 8, 1918.

DEAR ARTHUR:

Your letter, written from the University Club, is just come. It makes a very distinct impression on my mind which my own conclusions and fears have long confirmed. Let me put it at its worst and in very bald terms: The Great White Chief is at bottom pacifist, has always been so and is so now. Of course I do not mean a pacifist at any price, certainly not a cowardly pacifist. But (looked



at theoretically) war is, of course, an absurd way of settling any quarrel, an irrational way. Men and nations are wasteful, cruel, pigheaded fools to indulge in it. Quite true. But war is also the only means of adding to a nation's territory the territory of other nations which they do not wish to sell or to give up—the robbers' only way to get more space or to get booty. This last explains this war. Every Hohenzollern (except the present Emperor's father, who reigned only a few months) since Frederick the Great has added to Prussian and German area of rule. Every one, therefore, as he comes to the throne, feels an obligation to make his addition to the Empire. For this the wars of Prussia with Austria, with Denmark, with France were brought on. They succeeded and won the additions that old William I made to the Empire. Now William II must make *his* addition. He prepared for more than forty years; the nation prepared before he came to the throne and his whole reign has been given to making sure that he was ready. It's a robber's raid. Of course, the German case has been put so as to direct attention from this bald fact.

Now the philosophical pacifists—I don't mean the cowardly, yellow-dog ones—have never quite seen the war in this aspect. They regard it as a dispute about something—about trade, about more seaboard, about this or that, whereas it is only a robber's adventure. They want other people's property. They want money, treasure, land, indemnities, minerals, raw materials; and they set out to take them.

Now confusing this character of the war with some sort of rational dispute about something, the pacifists try in every way to stop it, so that the "issue" may be reasoned out, debated, discussed, negotiated. Surely the President tried to reach peace—tried as hard and as long as the

people would allow him. The Germans argued away time with him while they got their submarine fleet built. Then they carried out the programme they had always had in mind and had never thought of abandoning. Now they wish to gain more time, to slacken the efforts of the Allies, if possible to separate them by asking for "discussions"—peace by "negotiation." When you are about to kill the robber, he cries out, "For God's sake, let's discuss the question between us. We can come to terms."—Now here's where the danger comes from the philosophical pacifist—from any man who does not clearly understand the nature of the war and of the enemy. To discuss the difference between us is so very reasonable in sound—so very reasonable in fact if there were a discussable difference. It is a programme that would always be in order except with a burglar or a robber.

The yet imperfect understanding of the war and of the nature of the German in the United States, especially at Washington—more especially in the White House—herein lies the danger.

. . . This little rest down here is a success. The weather is a disappointment—windy and cold. But to be away from London and away from folks—that's much. Shoccraft is very good.<sup>1</sup> He sends us next to nothing. Almost all we've got is an invitation to lunch with Their Majesties and they've been good enough to put that off. It's a far-off country, very fine, I'm sure in summer, and with most beautiful golf links. The hill is now so windy that no sane man can play there.

We're enjoying the mere quiet. And your mother is quite well again.

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

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<sup>1</sup>Eugene C. Shoccraft, the Ambassador's secretary.

*To Mrs. Charles G. Loring*

St. Ives, Cornwall,  
March 10, 1918.

DEAR KITTY:

A week here. No news. Shoecraft says we've missed nothing in London. What we came for we've got: your mother's quite well. She climbs these high hills quite spryly. We've had a remarkable week in this respect—we haven't carried on a conversation with any human being but ourselves. I don't think any such thing has ever happened before. I can stand a week, perhaps a fortnight of this now. But I don't care for it for any long period. At the bottom of this high and steep hill is the quaintest little town I ever saw. There are some streets so narrow that when a donkey cart comes along the urchins all have to run to the next corner or into doors. There is no sidewalk, of course; and the donkey cart takes the whole room between the houses. Artists take to the town, and they have funny little studios down by the water front in tiny houses built of stone in pieces big enough to construct a tidewater front. Imagine stone walls made of stone, each weighing tons, built into little houses about as big as your little back garden! There's one fellow here (an artist) whom I used to know in New York, so small has the world become!

On another hill behind us is a triangular stone monument to John Knill. He was once mayor of the town. When he died in 1782, he left money to the town. If the town is to keep the money (as it has) the Mayor must once in every five years form a procession and march up to this monument. There ten girls, natives of the town, and two widows must dance around the monument to the

playing of a fiddle and a drum, the girls dressed in white. This ceremony has gone on, once in five years, all this time and the town has old Knill's money!

Your mother and I—though we are neither girls nor widows—danced around it this morning, wondering what sort of curmudgeon old John Knill was.

Don't you see how easily we fall into an idle mood?

Well, here's a photograph of little Alice looking up at me from the table where I write—a good, sweet face she has.

And you'll never get another letter from me in a time and from a place whereof there is so little to tell.

Affectionately, dear Kitty,

W. H. P.

*To Ralph W. Page*

Tregenna Castle Hotel,

St. Ives, Cornwall,

March 12, 1918.

MY DEAR RALPH:

Arthur has sent me Gardiner's 37-page sketch of American-British Concords and Discords—a remarkable sketch; and he has reminded me that your summer plan is to elaborate (into a popular style) your sketch of the same subject. You and Gardiner went over the same ground, each in a very good fashion. That's a fascinating task, and it opens up a wholly new vista of our History and of Anglo-Saxon, democratic history. Much lies ahead of that. And all this puts it in my mind to write you a little discourse on *style*. Gardiner has no style. He put his facts down much as he would have noted on a blue print the facts about an engineering project that he sketched. The style of your article, which has much to



be said for it as a magazine article, is not the best style for a book.

Now, this whole question of style—well, it's the gist of good writing. There's no really effective writing without it. Especially is this true of historical writing. Look at X Y Z's writings. He knows his American history and has written much on it. He's written it as an Ohio blacksmith shoes a horse—not a touch of literary value in it all; all dry as dust—as dry as old Bancroft.

Style is good breeding—and art—in writing. It consists of the arrangement of your matter, first; then, more, of the gait; the manner and the manners of your expressing it. Work every group of facts, naturally and logically grouped to begin with, into a climax. Work every group up as a sculptor works out his idea or a painter, each group complete in itself. Throw out any superfluous facts or any merely minor facts that prevent the orderly working up of the group—that prevent or mar the effect you wish to present.

Then, when you've got a group thus presented, go over what you've made of it, to make sure you've used your material and its arrangement to the best effect, taking away merely extraneous or superfluous or distracting facts, here and there adding concrete illustrations—putting in a convincing detail here, and there a touch of colour.

Then go over it for your vocabulary. See that you use no word in a different meaning than it was used 100 years ago and will be used 100 years hence. You wish to use only the permanent words—words, too, that will be understood to carry the same meaning to English readers in every part of the world. Your vocabulary must be chosen from the permanent, solid, stable parts of the language.

Then see that no sentence contains a hint of obscurity.

Then go over the words you use to see if they be the

best. Don't fall into merely current phrases. If you have a long word, see if a native short one can be put in its place which will be more natural and stronger. Avoid a Latin vocabulary and use a plain English one—short words instead of long ones.

Most of all, use *idioms*—English idioms of force. Say an agreement was “come to.” Don't say it was “consummated.” For the difference between idioms and a Latin style, compare Lincoln with George Washington. One's always interesting and convincing. The other is dull in spite of all his good sense. How most folk do misuse and waste words!

Freeman went too far in his use of one-syllable words. It became an affectation. But he is the only man I can think of that ever did go too far in that direction. X—would have written a great history if he had had the natural use of idioms. As it is, he has good sense and no style; and his book isn't half so interesting as it would have been if he had some style—some proper value of short, clear-cut words that mean only one thing and that leave no vagueness.

You'll get a good style if you practice it. It is in your blood and temperament and way of saying things. But it's a high art and must be laboriously cultivated.

Yours affectionately,  
W. H. P.

This glimpse of a changing and chastened England appears in a letter of this period:

The disposition shown by an endless number of such incidents is something more than a disposition of gratitude of a people helped when they are hard pressed. All these things show the changed and changing Englishman. It

has already come to him that he may be weaker than he had thought himself and that he may need friends more than he had once imagined; and, if he must have helpers and friends, he'd rather have his own kinsmen. He's a queer "cuss," this Englishman. But he isn't a liar nor a coward nor any sort of "a yellow dog." He's true, and he never runs—a possible hero any day, and, when heroic, modest and quiet and graceful. The trouble with him has been that he got great world power too easily. In the times when he exploited the world for his own enrichment, there were no other successful exploiters. It became an easy game to him. He organized sea traffic and sea power. Of course he became rich—far, far richer than anybody else, and, therefore, content with himself. He has, therefore, kept much of his mediæval impedimenta, his dukes and marquesses and all that they imply—his outworn ceremonies and his mediæval disregard of his social inferiors. Nothing is well done in this Kingdom for the big public, but only for the classes. The railway stations have no warm waiting rooms. The people pace the platform till the train comes, and milord sits snugly wrapt up in his carriage till his footman announces the approach of the train. And occasional discontent is relieved by emigration to the Colonies. If any man becomes weary of his restrictions he may go to Australia and become a gentleman. The remarkable loyalty of the Colonies has in it something of a servant's devotion to his old master.

Now this trying time of war and the threat and danger of extinction are bringing—have in fact already brought—the conviction that many changes must come. The first sensible talk about popular education ever heard here is just now beginning. Many a gentleman has made up his mind to try to do with less than seventeen servants

for the rest of his life since he now *has* to do with less. Privilege, on which so large a part of life here rests, is already pretty well shot to pieces. A lot of old baggage will never be recovered after this war: that's certain. During a little after-dinner speech in a club not long ago I indulged in a pleasantry about excessive impedimenta. Lord Derby, Minister of War and a bluff and honest aristocrat, sat near me and he whispered to me—"That's me." "Yes," I said, "that's you," and the group about us made merry at the jest. The meaning of this is, they now joke about what was the most solemn thing in life three years ago.

None of this conveys the idea I am trying to explain—the change in the English point of view and outlook—a half century's change in less than three years, radical and fundamental change, too. The mother of the Duke of X came to see me this afternoon, hobbling on her sticks and feeble, to tell me of a radiant letter she had received from her granddaughter who has been in Washington visiting the Spring Rices. "It's all very wonderful," said the venerable lady, "and my granddaughter actually heard the President make a speech!" Now, knowing this lady and knowing her son, the Duke, and knowing how this girl, his daughter, has been brought up, I dare swear that three years ago not one of them would have crossed the street to hear any President that ever lived. They've simply become different people. They were very genuine before. They are very genuine now.

It is this steadfastness in them that gives me sound hope for the future. They don't forget sympathy or help or friendship. Our going into the war has eliminated the Japanese question. It has shifted the virtual control of the world to English-speaking peoples. It will bring into the best European minds the American ideal of service.



It will, in fact, give us the lead and make the English in the long run our willing followers and allies. I don't mean that we shall always have plain sailing. But I do mean that the direction of events for the next fifty or one hundred years has now been determined.

Yet Page found one stolid opposition to his attempts to establish the friendliest relations between the two peoples. That offish attitude of the Washington Administration, to which reference has already been made, did not soften with the progress of events. Another experience now again brought out President Wilson's coldness toward his allies. About this time many rather queer Americans—some of the "international" breed—were coming to England on more or less official missions. Page was somewhat humiliated by these excursions; he knew that his country possessed an almost unlimited supply of vivid speakers, filled with zeal for the allied cause, whose influence, if they could be induced to cross the Atlantic, would put new spirit into the British. The idea of having a number of distinguished Americans come to England and tell the British public about the United States and especially about the American preparations for war, was one that now occupied his thoughts. In June, 1917, he wrote his old friend Dr. Wallace Buttrick, extending an invitation to visit Great Britain as a guest of the British Government. Dr. Buttrick made a great success; his speeches drew large crowds and proved a source of inspiration to the British masses. So successful were they, indeed, that the British Government desired that other Americans of similar type should come and spread the message. In November, therefore, Dr. Buttrick returned to the United States for the purpose of organizing such a committee. Among the eminent Americans whom he per-

suaded to give several months of their time to this work of heartening our British allies were Mr. George E. Vincent, President of the Rockefeller Foundation, Mr. Harry Pratt Judson, President of Chicago University, Mr. Charles R. Van Hise, President of the University of Wisconsin, Mr. Edwin A. Alderman, President of the University of Virginia, Mr. Harry Emerson Fosdick, and Bishop Lawrence of Massachusetts. It was certainly a distinguished group, but it was the gentleman selected to be its head that gave it almost transcendent importance in the eyes of the British Government. This was ex-President William H. Taft. The British lay greater emphasis upon official rank than do Americans, and the fact that an ex-President of the United States was to head this delegation made it almost an historic event. Mr. Taft was exceedingly busy, but he expressed his willingness to give up all his engagements for several months and to devote his energies to enlightening the British public about America and its purposes in the war. An official invitation was sent him from London and accepted.

Inasmuch as Mr. Taft was an ex-President and a representative of the political party opposed to the one in power, he thought it only courteous that he call upon Mr. Wilson, explain the purpose of his mission, and obtain his approval. He therefore had an interview with the President at the White House; the date was December 12, 1917. As soon as Mr. Wilson heard of the proposed visit to Great Britain he showed signs of irritation. He at once declared that it met with his strongest disapproval. When Mr. Taft remarked that the result of such an enterprise would be to draw Great Britain and the United States more closely together, Mr. Wilson replied that he seriously questioned the desirability of drawing the two countries any more closely together than they already were. He

was opposed to putting the United States in a position of seeming in any way to be involved with British policy. There were divergencies of purpose, he said, and there were features of the British policy in this war of which he heartily disapproved. The motives of the United States in this war, the President continued, "were unselfish, but the motives of Great Britain seemed to him to be of a less unselfish character." Mr. Wilson cited the treaty between Great Britain and Italy as a sample of British statesmanship which he regarded as proving this contention. The President's reference to this Italian treaty has considerable historic value; there has been much discussion as to when the President first learned of its existence, but it is apparent from this conversation with ex-President Taft that he must have known about it on December 12, 1917, for President Wilson based his criticism of British policy largely upon this Italian convention.<sup>1</sup>

The President showed more and more feeling about the matter as the discussion continued. "There are too many Englishmen," he said, "in this country and in Washington now and I have asked the British Ambassador to have some of them sent home."

Mr. Wilson referred to the jealousy of France at the close relations which were apparently developing between Great Britain and the United States. This was another reason, he thought, why it was unwise to make the bonds between them any tighter. He also called Mr. Taft's attention to the fact that there were certain elements in the United States which were opposed to Great Britain—this evidently being a reference to the Germans and the

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<sup>1</sup>As related in Chapter XXII, page 267, President Wilson was informed of the so-called "secret treaties" by Mr. Balfour, in the course of his memorable visit to the White House.

Irish—and he therefore believed that any conspicuous attempts to increase the friendliness of the two countries for each other would arouse antagonism and resentment.

As Mr. Taft was leaving he informed Mr. Wilson that the plan for his visit and that of the other speakers had originated with the American Ambassador to Great Britain. This, however, did not improve the President's temper.

"Page," said the President, "is really an Englishman and I have to discount whatever he says about the situation in Great Britain."

And then he added, "I think you ought not to go, and the same applies to the other members of the party. I would like you to make my attitude on this question known to those having the matter in charge."

Despite this rebuff Dr. Buttrick and Mr. Taft were reluctant to give up the plan. An appeal was therefore made to Colonel House. Colonel House at once said that the proposed visit was an excellent thing and that he would make a personal appeal to Mr. Wilson in the hope of changing his mind. A few days afterward Colonel House called up Dr. Buttrick and informed him that he had not succeeded. "I am sorry," wrote Colonel House to Page, "that the Buttrick speaking programme has turned out as it has. The President was decidedly opposed to it and referred to it with some feeling."



## CHAPTER XXV

### GETTING THE AMERICAN TROOPS TO FRANCE

A GROUP of letters, written at this time, touch upon a variety of topics which were then engaging the interest of all countries:

*To Arthur W. Page*

London, January 19, 1918.

DEAR ARTHUR:

While your letter is still fresh in my mind I dictate the following in answer to your question about Palestine.

It has not been settled—and cannot be, I fancy, until the Peace Conference—precisely what the British will do with Palestine, but I have what I think is a correct idea of their general attitude on the subject. First, of course, they do not propose to allow it to go back into Turkish hands; and the same can be said also of Armenia and possibly of Mesopotamia. Their idea of the future of Palestine is that whoever shall manage the country, or however it shall be managed, the Jews shall have the same chance as anybody else. Of course that's quite an advance for the Jews there, but their idea is not that the Jews should have command of other populations there or control over them—not in the least. My guess at the English wish, which I have every reason to believe is the right guess, is that they would wish to have Palestine internationalized, whatever that means. That is to say, that it should have control of its own local affairs and be a free

country but that some great Power, or number of Powers, should see to it that none of the races that live there should be allowed to impose upon the other races. I don't know just how such a guarantee can be given by the great Powers or such a responsibility assumed except by an agreement among two or three of them, or barely possibly by the English keeping control themselves; but the control by the English after the war of the former German colonies will put such a large task on them that they will not be particularly eager to extend the area of their responsibility elsewhere. Of course a difficult problem will come up also about Constantinople and the Dardanelles. The Dardanelles must be internationalized.

I have never been able to consider the Zionist movement seriously. It is a mere religious sentiment which will express itself in action by very few people. I have asked a number of Jews at various times who are in favour of the Zionist movement if they themselves are going there. They always say no. The movement, therefore, has fixed itself in my mind as a Jewish movement in which no Jew that you can lay your hands on will ever take part but who wants other Jews to take part in it. Of course there might be a flocking to Palestine of Jews from Russia and the adjoining countries where they are not happy, but I think the thing is chiefly a sentiment and nothing else. Morgenthau<sup>1</sup> is dead right. I agree with him *in toto*. I do not think anybody in the United States need be the least concerned about the Zionist movement because there isn't a single Jew in our country such a fool as to go to Palestine when he can stay in the United States. The whole thing is a sentimental, religious, more or less

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<sup>1</sup>Mr. Henry Morgenthau, American Ambassador to Turkey, 1913-16, an American of Jewish origin who opposed the Zionist movement as un-American and deceptive.

unnatural and fantastic idea and I don't think will ever trouble so practical a people as we and our Jews are.

The following memorandum is dated February 10, 1918:

General Bliss<sup>1</sup> has made a profound and the best possible impression here by his wisdom and his tact. The British have a deep respect for him and for his opinions, and in inspiring and keeping high confidence in us he is worth an army in himself. I have seen much of him and found out a good deal about his methods. He is simplicity and directness itself. Although he is as active and energetic as a boy, he spends some time by himself to think things out and even to say them to himself to see how his conclusions strike the ear as well as the mind. He has been staying here at the house of one of our resident officers. At times he goes to his room and sits long by the fire and argues his point—out loud—oblivious to everything else. More than once when he was so engaged one of his officers has knocked at the door and gone in and laid telegrams on the table beside him and gone out without his having known of the officer's entrance. Then he comes out and tries his conclusion on someone who enjoys his confidence. And then he stands by it and when the time comes delivers it slowly and with precision; and there he is; and those who hear him see that he has thought the matter out on all sides and finally.

Our various establishments in London have now become big—the Embassy proper, the Naval and Army Headquarters, the Red Cross, the War Trade Board's representatives, and now (forthwith) the Shipping Board, besides Mr. Crosby of the Treasury. The volume of work is

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<sup>1</sup>American member of the Supreme War Council. Afterward member of the American Commission to Negotiate Peace.

enormous and it goes smoothly, except for the somewhat halting Army Headquarters, the high personnel of which is now undergoing a change; and that will now be all right. I regularly make the rounds of all the Government Departments with which we deal to learn if they find our men and methods effective, and the rounds of all our centres of activity to find whether there be any friction with the British. The whole machine moves very well. For neither side hesitates to come to me whenever they strike even small snags. All our people are at work on serious tasks and (so far as I know) there are now none of those despicable creatures here who used during our neutrality days to come from the United States on peace errands and what-not to spy on the Embassy and me (their inquiries and their correspondence were catalogued by the police). I have been amazed at the activity of some of them whose doings I have since been informed of.

We now pay this tribute to the submarines—that we have entered the period of compulsory rations. There is enough to eat in spite of the food that has gone to feed the fishes. But no machinery of distribution to a whole population can be uniformly effective. The British worker with his hands is a greedy feeder and a sturdy growler and there will be trouble. But I know no reason to apprehend serious trouble.

The utter break-up of Russia and the German present occupation of so much of the Empire as she wants have had a contrary effect on two sections of opinion here, as I interpret the British mind. On the undoubtedly enormously dominant section of opinion these events have only stiffened resolution. They say that Germany now *must* be whipped to a finish. Else she will have doubled her empire and will hold the peoples of her new territory as vassals without regard to their wishes and the war lord



caste will be more firmly seated than ever before. If her armies be literally whipped she'll have to submit to the Allies' terms, which will dislodge her from overlordship over these new unwilling subjects—and she can be dislodged in no other way. This probably means a long war, now that after a time she can get raw materials for war later and food from Rumania and the Ukraine, etc. This will mean a fight in France and Belgium till a decisive victory is won and the present exultant German will is broken.

The minority section of public opinion—as I judge a small minority—has the feeling that such an out-and-out military victory cannot be won or is not worth the price; and that the enemies of Germany, allowing her to keep her Eastern accretions, must make the best terms they can in the East; that there's no use in running the risk of Italy's defeat and defection before some sort of bargain could be made about Belgium, Alsace-Lorraine, and Serbia. Of course this plan would leave the German warlordship intact and would bring no sort of assurance of a prolonged peace. It would, too, leave European Russia at least to German mercy, and would leave the Baltic and the Black Seas practically wholly under German influence. As for the people of Russia, there seems small chance for them in this second contingency. The only way to save them is to win a decisive victory.

As matters stand to-day Lord Lansdowne and his friends (how numerous they are nobody knows) are the loudest spokesmen for such a peace as can be made. But it is talked much of in Asquith circles that the time may come when this policy will be led by Mr. Asquith, in a form somewhat modified from the Lansdowne formula. Mr. Asquith has up to this time patriotically supported the government and he himself has said nothing in public which could warrant linking his name with an early peace-

seeking policy. But his friends openly and incessantly predict that he will, at a favourable moment, take this cue. I myself can hardly believe it. Political victory in Great Britain doesn't now lie in that direction.

The dominant section of opinion is much grieved at Russia's surrender, but they refuse to be discouraged by it. They recall how Napoleon overran most of Europe, and the French held practically none of his conquests after his fall.

Such real political danger as exists here—if any exists, of which I am not quite sure—comes not only now mainly of this split in public opinion but also and to a greater degree from the personal enemies of the present government. Lloyd George is kept in power because he is the most energetic man in sight—by far. Many who support him do not like him nor trust him—except that nobody doubts his supreme earnestness to win the war. On all other subjects he has enemies of old and he makes new ones. His intense and superb energy has saved him in two notable crises. His dismissal of Sir William Robertson<sup>1</sup> has been accepted in the interest of greater unity of military control, but it was a dangerous rapids that he shot, for he didn't do it tactfully. Yet there's a certain danger to the present powers in the feeling that some of them are wearing out. Parliament itself—an old one now—is thought to have gone stale. Bonar Law is overworked and tired; Balfour is often said to be too philosophical and languid; but, when this feeling seems in danger of taking definite shape, he makes a clearer statement than anybody else and catches on his feet. The man of new energy, not yet fagged, is Geddes,<sup>2</sup> whose frankness carries conviction.

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<sup>1</sup>Sir Henry Wilson had recently succeeded Sir William Robertson as Chief of the Imperial General Staff.

<sup>2</sup>First Lord of the Admiralty.

*To the President*

London, March 17, 1918.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

The rather impatient and unappreciative remarks made by the Prime Minister before a large meeting of preachers of the "free" churches about a League of Nations reminds me to write you about the state of British opinion on that subject. What Lloyd George said to these preachers is regrettable because it showed a certain impatience of mind from which he sometimes suffers; but it is only fair to him to say that his remarks that day did not express a settled opinion. For on more than one previous occasion he has spoken of the subject in a wholly different tone—much more appreciatively. On that particular day he had in mind only the overwhelming necessity to win the war—other things, *all* other things must wait. In a way this is his constant mood—the mood to make everybody feel that the only present duty is to win the war. He has been accused of almost every defect in the calendar except of slackness about the war. Nobody has ever doubted his earnestness nor his energy about *that*. And the universal confidence in his energy and earnestness is what keeps him in office. Nobody sees any other man who can push and inspire as well as he does. It would be a mistake, therefore, to pay too much heed to any particular utterance of this electrical creature of moods, on any subject.

Nevertheless, he hasn't thought out the project of a league to enforce peace further than to see the difficulties. He sees that such a league might mean, in theory at least, the giving over in some possible crisis the command of the British Fleet to an officer of some other nationality. That's unthinkable to any red-blooded son of

these islands. Seeing a theoretical possibility even of raising such a question, the British mind stops and refuses to go further—refuses in most cases even to inquire seriously whether any such contingency is ever likely to come.

The British Grand Fleet, in fact, is a subject that stands alone in power and value and in difficulties. It classifies itself with nothing else. Since over and over again it has saved these islands from invasion when nothing else could have saved them and since during this war in particular it has saved the world from German conquest—as every Englishman believes—it lies in their reverence and their gratitude and their abiding convictions as a necessary and perpetual shield so long as Great Britain shall endure. If the Germans are thrashed to a frazzle (and we haven't altogether done that yet) and we set about putting the world in order, when we come to discuss Disarmament, the British Fleet will be the most difficult item in the world to dispose of. It is not only a Fact, with a great and saving history, it is also a sacred Tradition and an Article of Faith.

The first reason, therefore, why the British general mind has not firmly got hold on a league is the instinctive fear that the formation of any league may in some conceivable way affect the Grand Fleet. Another reason is the general inability of a somewhat slow public opinion to take hold on more than one subject at a time or more than one urgent part of one subject. The One Subject, of course, is winning the war. Since everything else depends on that, everything else must wait on that.

The League, therefore, has not taken hold on the public imagination here as it has in the United States. The large mass of the people have not thought seriously about it: it has not been strongly and persistently presented to the mass of the people. There is no popular or general organization to promote it. There is even, here and there,



condemnation of the idea. The (London) *Morning Post*, for example, goes out of its way once in a while to show the wickedness of the idea because, so it argues, it will involve the sacrifice, more or less, of nationality. But the *Morning Post* is impervious to new ideas and is above all things critical in its activities and very seldom constructive. The typical Tory mind in general sees no good in the idea. The typical Tory mind is the insular mind.

On the other hand, the League idea is understood as a necessity and heartily approved by two powerful sections of public opinion—(1) the group of public men who have given attention to it, such as Bryce, Lord Robert Cecil, and the like, and (2) some of the best and strongest leaders of Labour. There is good reason to hope that whenever a fight and an agitation is made for a League these two sections of public opinion will win; but an agitation and a fight must come. Lord Bryce, in the intervals of his work as chairman of a committee to make a plan for the reorganization of the House of Lords, which, he remarked to me the other day, “involves as much labour as a Government Department,” has fits of impatience about pushing a campaign for a league, and so have a few other men. They ask me if it be not possible to have good American public speakers come here—privately, of course, and in no way connected with our Government nor speaking for it—to explain the American movement for a League in order to arouse a public sentiment on the subject.

Thus the case stands at present.

Truth and error alike and odd admixtures of them come in waves over this censored land where one can seldom determine what is true, before the event, from the newspapers. “News” travels by word of mouth, and information that one can depend on is got by personal inquiry from sources that can be trusted.

There is a curious wave of fear just now about what Labour may do, and the common gossip has it that there is grave danger in the situation. I can find no basis for such a fear. I have talked with labour leaders and I have talked with members of the government who know most about the subject. There is not a satisfactory situation—there has not been since the war began. There has been a continuous series of labour “crises,” and there have been a good many embarrassing strikes, all of which have first been hushed up and settled—at least postponed. One cause of continuous trouble has been the notion held by the Unions, sometimes right and sometimes wrong, that the employers were making abnormal profits and that they were not getting their due share. There have been and are also other causes of trouble. It was a continuous quarrel even in peace times. But I can find no especial cause of fear now. Many of the Unions have had such advances of wages that the Government has been severely criticized for giving in. Just lately a large wing of the Labour Party put forth its war aims which—with relatively unimportant exceptions—coincide with the best declarations made by the Government’s own spokesmen.

Of course, no prudent man would venture to make dogmatic predictions. There have been times when for brief intervals any one would have been tempted to fear that these quarrels might cause an unsatisfactory conclusion of the war. But the undoubted patriotism of the British workman has every time saved the situation. While a danger point does lie here, there is no reason to be more fearful now than at any preceding time when no especial trouble was brewing. This wave of gossip and fear has no right to sweep over the country now.

Labour hopes and expects and is preparing to win the next General Election—whether with good reason or not

I cannot guess. But most men expect it to win the Government at some time—most of them *after* the war. I recall that Lord Grey once said to me, before the war began, that a general political success of the Labour Party was soon to be expected.

Another wave which, I hear, has swept over Rome as well as London is a wave of early peace expectation. The British newspapers have lately been encouraging this by mysterious phrases. Some men here of good sense and sound judgment think that this is the result of the so-called German "peace offensive," which makes the present the most dangerous period of the war.

W. H. P.

*To David F. Houston*<sup>1</sup>

London, March 23, 1918.

MY DEAR HOUSTON:

It is very kind of you indeed to write so generously about the British visitors who are invading our sacred premises, such as the Archbishop of York, and it is good to hear from you anyhow about any subject and I needn't say that it is quite a rare experience also. I wish you would take a little of your abundant leisure and devote it to good letters to me.

And in some one of your letters tell me this.—The British send over men of this class that you have written about to see us, but they invite over here—and we permit to come—cranks on prohibition, experts in the investigation of crime, short-haired women who wish to see how British babies are reared, peace cranks and freaks of other kinds.<sup>2</sup> Our Government apparently won't let plain,

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<sup>1</sup>Secretary of Agriculture.

<sup>2</sup>See Chapter XXIV.

honest, normal civilians come over, but if a fellow comes along who wants to investigate some monstrosity then one half of the Senate, one half of the House of Representatives, and a number of the executive offices of the Government give him the most cordial letters. Now there are many things, of course, that I don't know, but it has been my fate to have a pretty extensive acquaintance with cranks of every description in the United States. I don't think there is any breed of them that didn't haunt my office while I was an editor. Now I am surely punished for all my past sins by having those fellows descend on me here. I know them, nearly all, from past experience and now just for the sake of keeping the world as quiet as possible I have to give them time here far out of proportion to their value.

Now, out of your great wisdom, I wish you would explain to me why the deuce we let all this crew come over here instead of sending a shipload of perfectly normal, dignified, and right-minded gentlemen. These thug reformers!—Baker will be here in a day or two and if I can remember it I am going to suggest to him that he round them all up and put them in the trenches in France where those of them who have so far escaped the gallows ought to be put.

I am much obliged to have the illuminating statement about our crops. I am going to show it to certain gentlemen here who will be much cheered by it. By gracious, you ought to hear their appreciation of what we are doing! We are not doing it for the sake of their appreciation, but if we were out to win it we could not do it better. Down at bottom the Englishman is a good fellow. He has his faults but he doesn't get tired and he doesn't suffer spasms of emotion.

Give my love to Mrs. Houston, and do sit down and



write me a good long letter—a whole series of them, in fact.

Believe me, always most heartily yours,

WALTER HINES PAGE.

*To Frank L. Polk*

London, March 22, 1918.

DEAR MR. POLK:

You are good enough to mention the fact that the Embassy has some sort of grievance against the Department. Of course it has, and you are, possibly, the only man that can remove it. It is this: You don't come here to see the war and this government and these people who are again saving the world as we are now saving them. I thank Heaven and the Administration for Secretary Baker's visit. It is a dramatic moment in the history of the race, of democracy, and of the world. The State Department has the duty to deal with foreign affairs—the especial duty—and yet no man in the State Department has been here since the war began. This doesn't look pretty and it won't look pretty when the much over-worked "future historian" writes it down in a book. Remove that grievance.

The most interesting thing going on in the world to-day—a thing that in History will transcend the war and be reckoned its greatest gain—is the high leadership of the President in formulating the struggle, in putting its aims high, and in taking the democratic lead in the world, a lead that will make the world over—and in taking the democratic lead of the English-speaking folk. Next most impressive to that is to watch the British response to that lead. Already they have doubled the number of their voters, and even more important definite

steps in Democracy will be taken. My aim—and it's the only way to save the world—is to lead the British in this direction. They are the most easily teachable people in our way of thinking and of doing. Of course everybody who works toward such an aim provokes the cry from a lot of fools among us who accuse him of toadying to the English and of "accepting the conventional English conclusion." They had as well talk of missionaries to India accepting Confucius or Buddha. Their fleet has saved us four or five times. It's about time we were saving them from this bloody Thing that we call Europe, for our sake and for theirs.

The bloody Thing will get us all if we don't fight our level best; and it's only by *our* help that we'll be saved. That clearly gives us the leadership. Everybody sees that. Everybody acknowledges it. The President authoritatively speaks it—speaks leadership on a higher level than it was ever spoken before to the whole world. As soon as we get this fighting job over, the world procession toward freedom—our kind of freedom—will begin under our lead. This being so, can't you delegate the writing of telegrams about "facilitating the license to ship poppy seed to McKesson and Robbins," and come over and see big world-forces at work?

I cannot express my satisfaction at Secretary Baker's visit. It was historic—the first member of the Cabinet, I think, who ever came here while he held office. He made a great impression and received a hearty welcome.

That's the only grievance I can at the moment unload on you. We're passing out of our old era of isolation. These benighted heathen on this island whom we'll yet save (since they are well worth saving) will be with us as

we need them in future years and centuries. Come, help us heighten this fine spirit.

Always heartily yours,  
WALTER HINES PAGE.

P. S. You'd see how big our country looks from a distance. It's gigantic, I assure you.

The above letter was written on what was perhaps the darkest day of the whole war. The German attack on the Western Front, which had been long expected, had now been launched, and, at the moment that Page was penning this cheery note to Mr. Polk, the German armies had broken through the British defenses, had pushed their lines forty miles ahead, and, in the judgment of many military men, had Paris almost certainly within their grasp. A great German gun, placed about seventy miles from the French capital, was dropping shells upon the apparently doomed city. This attack had been regarded as inevitable since the collapse of Russia, which had enabled the Germans to concentrate practically all their armies on the Western Front.

The world does not yet fully comprehend the devastating effect of this apparently successful attack upon the allied morale. British statesmen and British soldiers made no attempt to conceal from official Americans the desperate state of affairs. It was the expectation that the Germans might reach Calais and thence invade England. The War Office discussed these probabilities most freely with Colonel Slocum, the American military attaché. The simple fact was that both the French and the British armies were practically bled white.

"For God's sake, get your men over!" they urged General Slocum. "You have got to finish it."

Page was writing urgently to President Wilson to the same purpose. Send the men and send them at once. "I pray God," were his solemn words to Mr. Wilson, "that you will not be too late!"

One propitious event had taken place at the same time as the opening of the great German offensive. Mr. Newton D. Baker, the American Secretary of War, had left quietly for France in late February, 1918, and had reached the Western Front in time to obtain a first-hand sight of the great March drive. No visit in history has ever been better timed, and no event could have better played into Page's hands. He had been urging Washington to send all available forces to France at the earliest possible date; he knew, as probably few other men knew, the extent to which the Allies were depending upon American troops to give the final blow to Germany; and the arrival of Secretary Baker at the scene of action gave him the opportunity to make a personal appeal. Page immediately communicated with the Secretary and persuaded him to come at once to London for a consultation with British military and political leaders. The Secretary spent only three days in London, but the visit, brief as it was, had historic consequences. He had many consultations with the British military men; he entered into their plans with enthusiasm; he himself received many ideas that afterward took shape in action, and the British Government obtained from him first-hand information as to the progress of the American Army and the American determination to coöperate to the last man and the last dollar. "Baker went straight back to France," Page wrote to his son Arthur, "and our whole coöperation began."

Page gave a dinner to Mr. Baker at the Embassy on March 23rd—two days after the great March drive had begun. This occasion gave the visitor a memorable



glimpse of the British temperament. Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour, Lord Derby, the War Secretary, General Biddle, of the United States Army, and Admiral Sims were the Ambassador's guests. Though the mighty issues then overhanging the world were not ignored in the conversation the atmosphere hardly suggested that the existence of the British Empire, indeed that of civilization itself, was that very night hanging in the balance. Possibly it was the general sombreness of events that caused these British statesmen to find a certain relief in jocular small talk and reminiscence. For the larger part of the evening not a word was said about the progress of the German armies in France. Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Balfour, seated on opposite sides of the table, apparently found relaxation in reviewing their political careers and especially their old-time political battles. They would laughingly recall occasions when, in American parlance, they had put each other "in a hole"; the exigencies of war had now made these two men colleagues in the same government, but the twenty years preceding 1914 they had spent in political antagonism. Page's guests on this occasion learned much political history of the early twentieth century, and the mutual confessions of Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Balfour gave these two men an insight into each others' motives and manœuvres which was almost as revealing. "Yes, you caught me that time," Mr. Lloyd George would say, and then he would counter with an episode of a political battle in which he had got the better of Mr. Balfour. The whole talk was lively and bantering, and accompanied with much laughter; and all this time shells from that long-distance gun were dropping at fifteen minute intervals upon the devoted women and children of Paris and the Germans were every hour driving the British back in disorder. At times the conversation took a more philosophic

turn. Would the men present like to go back twenty-five years and live their lives all over again? The practically unanimous decision of every man was that he would not wish to do so.

All this, of course, was merely on the surface; despite the laughter and the banter, there was only one thing which engrossed the Ambassador's guests, although there were not many references to it. That was the struggle which was then taking place in France. At intervals Mr. Lloyd George would send one of the guests, evidently a secretary, from the room. The latter, on his return, would whisper something in the Prime Minister's ear, but more frequently he would merely shake his head. Evidently he had been sent to obtain the latest news of the battle.

At one point the Prime Minister did refer to the great things taking place in France.

"This battle means one thing," he said. "That is a generalissimo."

"Why couldn't you have taken this step long ago?" Admiral Sims asked Mr. Lloyd George.

The answer came like a flash.

"If the cabinet two weeks ago had suggested placing the British Army under a foreign general, it would have fallen. Every cabinet in Europe would also have fallen, had it suggested such a thing."

#### *Memorandum on Secretary Baker's visit*

Secretary Baker's visit here, brief as it was, gave the heartiest satisfaction. So far as I know, he is the first member of an American Cabinet who ever came to England while he held office, as Mr. Balfour was the first member of a British Cabinet who ever went to the United States while he held office. The great governments of

the English-speaking folk have surely dealt with one another with mighty elongated tongues. Governments of democracies are not exactly instruments of precision. But they are at least human. But personal and human neglect of one another by these two governments over so long a period is an astonishing fact in our history. The wonder is that we haven't had more than two wars. And it is no wonder that the ignorance of Englishmen about America and the American ignorance of England are monumental, stupendous, amazing, passing understanding. I have on my mantelpiece a statuette of Benjamin Franklin, an excellent and unmistakable likeness which was made here during his lifetime; and the inscription burnt on its base is *Geo. Washington*. It serves me many a good turn with my English friends. I use it as a measure of their ignorance of us. Of course this is a mere little error of a statuette-maker, an error, moreover, of a hundred years ago. But it tells the story of to-day also. If I had to name the largest and most indelible impression that has been made on me during my five years' work here, I should say the ignorance and aloofness of the two peoples—not an ignorance of big essential facts but of personalities and temperaments—such as never occur except between men who had never seen one another.

But I was writing about Mr. Baker's visit and I've got a long way from that. I doubt if he knows himself what gratification it gave; for these men here have spoken to me about it as they could not speak to him.

Here is an odd fact: For sixty years, so far as I know, members of the Administration have had personal acquaintance with some of the men in power in Salvador, Costa Rica, Venezuela, Peru, etc., etc., and members of

the British Government have had personal acquaintance with some men in authority in Portugal, Serbia, Montenegro and Monte Carlo; but during this time (with the single exception of John Hay) I think no member of any Administration had a real personal acquaintance while he held office with any member of the British Government while he held office, and vice versa—till Mr. Balfour's visit. Suspicion grows out of ignorance. The longer I live here the more astonished I become at the fundamental ignorance of the British about us and of our fundamental ignorance about them. So colossal is this ignorance that every American sent here is supposed to be taken in, to become Anglophile; and often when one undertakes to enlighten Englishmen about the United States one becomes aware of a feeling inside the English of unbelief, as if he said, "Oh, well! you are one of those queer people who believe in republican government." All this is simply amazing. Poor Admiral Sims sometimes has a sort of mania, a delusion that nobody at Washington trusts his judgment because he said seven or eight years ago that he liked the English. Yet every naval officer who comes here, I understand, shares his views about practically every important naval problem or question. I don't deserve the compliment (it's a very high one) that some of my secretaries sometimes pay me when they say that I am the only man they know who tries to tell the whole truth to our Government in favour of the Englishman as well as against him. It is certain that American public opinion is universally supposed to suspect any American who tries to do anything with the British lion except to twist his tail—a supposition that I never believed to be true.—But it is true that the mutual ignorance is as high as the Andes and as deep as the ocean. Personal acquaintance removes it and nothing else will.



*To Arthur W. Page*

American Embassy,  
London, April 7, 1918.

DEAR ARTHUR:

I daresay you remember this epic:

Old Morgan's wife made butter and cheese;  
Old Morgan drank the whey.  
There came a wind from West to East  
And blew Old Morgan away.

I'm Old Morgan and your mother got ashamed of my wheyness and made the doctor prescribe cream for me. There's never been such a luxury, and anybody who supposes that I am now going to get fat and have my cream stopped simply doesn't know me. So, you see why I'm intent on shredded wheat biscuits. That's about the best form of real wheat that will keep. And there's no getting real wheat-stuff, pure and simple, in any other form.

There's no use in talking about starving people—except perhaps in India and China. White men can live on anything. The English could fight a century on cabbage and Brussels sprouts. I've given up hope of starving the Germans. A gut of dogmeat or horse flesh and a potato will keep them in fighting trim forever. I've read daily for two years of impending starvation across the Rhine; but I never even now hear of any dead ones from hunger. Cold steel or lead is the only fatal dose for them.

Therefore I know that shredded wheat will carry me through.

You'll see, I hope, from the clippings that I enclose that I'm not done for yet anyhow. Two speeches a day is no small stunt; and I did it again yesterday—hand

running; and I went out to dinner afterward. It was a notable occasion—this celebration of the anniversary of our coming into the war.<sup>1</sup>

Nobody here knows definitely just what to fear from the big battle; but everybody fears more or less. It's a critical time—very. I am told that that long-range gunning of Paris is the worst form of frightfulness yet tried. The shells do not kill a great many people. But their falling every fifteen minutes gets on people's nerves and they can't sleep. I hear they are leaving Paris in great numbers. Since the big battle began and the Germans have needed all their planes and more in France, they've let London alone. But nobody knows when they will begin again.

Nobody knows any future thing about the war, and everybody faces a fear.

Secretary Baker stayed with me the two days and three nights he was here. He made a good impression but he received a better one. He now knows something about the war. I had at dinner to meet him:

Lloyd George, Prime Minister.

Balfour, Foreign Secretary.

The Chief of Staff.

Lord Derby, War Secretary.

General Biddle, U. S. A., in command in London.

Admiral Sims, U. S. N.

The talk was to the point—good and earnest. Baker went straight back to France and our *whole* coöperation began. With the first group of four he had conferences besides for two days. His coming was an admirable move.

Yours affectionately,

W. H. P.

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<sup>1</sup>This meeting, on April 6, 1918, was held at the Mansion House. Page and Mr. Balfour were the chief speakers.

*To Ralph W. Page*

London, April 13, 1918.

DEAR RALPH:

Your cheery letters about entertaining governors, planting trees and shrubbery and your mother's little orchard give us much pleasure. The Southern Pines paper brings news of very great damage to the peach crop. I hope it is much exaggerated. Is it?

We haven't any news here, and I send you my weekly note only to keep my record clear. The great battle—no one talks or thinks of anything else. We have suffered and still suffer a good deal of fear and anxiety, with real reason, too. But the military men are reassuring. Yet I don't know just how far to trust their judgment or to share their hopes. Certainly this is the most dangerous situation that modern civilization was ever put in. If we can keep them from winning any *great* objective, like Paris or a channel port, we ought to end the war this year. If not, either they win or at the least prolong the war indefinitely. It's a hazardous and trying time.

There were never such casualties on either side as now. Such a bloody business cannot keep up all summer. But before everybody is killed or a decisive conclusion is reached, the armies will, no doubt, dig themselves in and take a period of comparative rest. People here see and feel the great danger. But the extra effort now *may* come too late. Still we keep up good hope. The British are hard to whip. They never give up. And as for the French army, I always remember Verdun and keep my courage up.

The wounded are coming over by the thousand. We are incomparably busy and in great anxiety about the

result (though still pretty firm in the belief that the Germans will lose), and luckily we keep very well.

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

*To Ralph W. Page*

London, April 7, 1918.

DEAR RALPH:

There used to be a country parson down in Wake County who, when other subjects were talked out, always took up the pleasing topic of saving your soul. That's the way your mother and I do—with the subject of going home. We talk over the battle, we talk over the boys, we talk over military and naval problems, we discuss the weather and all the babies, and then take up politics, and talk over the gossip of the wiseacres; but we seldom finish a conversation without discussing going home. And we reach just about as clear a conclusion on our topic as the country parson reached on his. I've had the doctors going over me (or rather your mother has) as an expert accountant goes over your books; and I tried to bribe them to say that I oughtn't to continue my arduous duties here longer. They wouldn't say any such thing. Thus that device failed—dead. It looks as if I were destined for a green old age and no martyr business at all.

All this is disappointing; and I don't see what to do but to go on. I can't keep from hoping that the big battle may throw some light on the subject; but there's no telling when the big battle will end. Nothing ends—that's the trouble. I sometimes feel that the war may never end, that it may last as the Napoleonic Wars did, for 20 years; and before that time we'll all have guns that shoot 100 miles. We can stay at home and indefinitely bombard



the enemy across the Rhine—have an endless battle at long range.

So, we stick to it, and give the peach trees time to grow up.

We had a big day in London yesterday—the anniversary of our entry into the war. I send you some newspaper clippings about it.

The next best news is that we have a little actual sunshine—a very rare thing—and some of the weather is now almost decent. . . .

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

## CHAPTER XXVI

### LAST DAYS IN ENGLAND

IN SPITE of the encouraging tone of the foregoing letters, everything was not well with Page. All through the winter of 1917-1918 his associates at the Embassy had noticed a change for the worse in his health. He seemed to be growing thinner; his face was daily becoming more haggard; he tired easily, and, after walking the short distance from his house to his Embassy, he would drop listlessly into his chair. His general bearing was that of a man who was physically and nervously exhausted. It was hoped that the holiday at St. Ives would help him; that he greatly enjoyed that visit, especially the westward—homeward—outlook on the Atlantic which it gave him, his letters clearly show; there was a temporary improvement also in his health, but only a temporary one. The last great effort which he made in the interest of the common cause was Secretary Baker's visit; the activities which this entailed wearied him, but the pleasure he obtained from the resultant increase in the American participation made the experience one of the most profitable of his life. Indeed, Page's last few months in England, though full of sad memories for his friends, contained little but satisfaction for himself. He still spent many a lonely evening by his fire, but his thoughts were now far more pleasurable than in the old *Lusitania* days. The one absorbing subject of contemplation now was that America was "in." His country had justified his deep confidence. The American Navy had played a determining part in defeating the

submarine, and American shipyards were turning out merchant ships faster than the Germans were destroying them. American troops were reaching France at a rate which necessarily meant the early collapse of the German Empire. Page's own family had responded to the call and this in itself was a cause of great contentment to a sick and weary man. The Ambassador's youngest son, Frank, had obtained a commission and was serving in France; his son-in-law, Charles G. Loring, was also on the Western Front; while from North Carolina Page's youngest brother Frank and two nephews had sailed for the open battle line. The bravery and success of the American troops did not surprise the Ambassador but they made his last days in England very happy.

Indeed, every day had some delightful experience for Page. The performance of the Americans at Cantigny especially cheered him. The day after this battle he and Mrs. Page entertained Mr. Lloyd George and other guests at lunch. The Prime Minister came bounding into the room with his characteristic enthusiasm, rushed up to Mrs. Page with both hands outstretched and shook hands joyously.

"Congratulations!" he exclaimed. "The Americans have done it! They have met the Prussian guard and defeated them!"

Mr. Lloyd George was as exuberant over the achievement as a child.

This was now the kind of experience that had become Page's daily routine. Lively as were his spirits, however, his physical frame was giving way. In fact Page, though he did not know it at the time, was suffering from a specific disease—nephritis; and its course, after Christmas of 1917, became rapid. His old friend, Dr. Wallace Buttrick,

had noted the change for the worse and had attempted to persuade him to go home.

"Quit your job, Page," he urged. "You have other big tasks waiting you at home. Why don't you go back?"

"No—no—not now."

"But, Page," urged Dr. Buttrick, "you are going to lay down your life."

"I have only one life to lay down," was the reply. "I can't quit now."

*To Mary E. Page<sup>1</sup>*

London, May 12, 1918.

DEAR MARY:

You'll have to take this big paper and this paint brush pen—it's all the pen these blunt British have. This is to tell you how very welcome your letter to Alice is—how *very* welcome, for nobody writes us the family news and nothing is so much appreciated. I'll try to call the shorter roll of us in the same way:

After a miserable winter we, too, are having the rare experience of a little sunshine in this dark, damp world of London. The constant confinement in the city and *in the house* (that's the worst of it—no outdoor life or fresh air) has played hob with my digestion. It's not bad, but it's troublesome, and for some time I've had the feeling of being one half well. It occurred to me the other day that I hadn't had leave from my work for four years, except my short visit home nearly two years ago. I asked for two months off, and I've got it. We are going down by the shore where there is fresh air and where I can live outdoors and get some exercise. We have a house that we can get there and be comfortable. To get away from London

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<sup>1</sup>Of Aberdeen, N. C., the Ambassador's sister.



when the weather promises to be good, and to get away from people seemed a joyous prospect. I can, at any time I must, come to London in two hours.

The job's too important to give up at this juncture. This, then, is the way we can keep it going. I've no such hard task now as I had during the years of our neutrality, which, praise God! I somehow survived, though I am now suffering more or less from the physical effects of that strain. Yet, since I have had the good fortune to win the confidence of this Government and these people, I feel that I ought to keep on now until some more or less natural time to change comes.

Alice keeps remarkably well—since her influenza late in the winter; but a rest away from London is really needed as much by her as by me. They work her to death. In a little while she is to go, by the invitation of the Government and the consent of the King, to christen a new British warship at Newcastle. It will be named the "Eagle." Meantime I'll be trying to get outdoor life at Sandwich.

Yesterday a regiment of our National Army marched through the streets of London and were reviewed by the King and me; and the town made a great day of it. While there is an undercurrent of complaint in certain sections of English opinion because we didn't come into the war sooner, there is a very general and very genuine appreciation of everything we have done and of all that we do. Nothing could be heartier than the welcome given our men here yesterday. Nor could any men have made a braver or better showing than they made. They made us all swell with pride.

They are coming over now, as you know, in great quantities. There were about 8,000 landed here last week and about 30,000 more are expected this week. I think

that many more go direct to France than come through England. On their way through England they do not come to London. Only twice have we had them here, yesterday and one day last summer when we had a parade of a regiment of engineers. For the *army* London is on a sidetrack—is an out of the way place. For our navy, of course, it's the European headquarters, since Admiral Sims has his headquarters here. We thus see a good many of our sailors who are allowed to come to London on leave. A few days ago I had a talk with a little bunch of them who came from one of our superdreadnaughts in the North Sea. They had just returned from a patrol across to the coast of Norway. "Bad luck, bad luck," they said, "on none of our long patrol trips have we seen a single Hun ship!"

About the war, you know as much as I know. There is a general confidence that the Allies will hold the Germans in their forthcoming effort to get to Calais or to Paris. Yet there is an undercurrent of fear. Nobody knows just how to feel about it. Probably another prodigious onslaught will be made before you receive this letter. It seems to me that we can make no intelligent guess until this German effort is finished in France—no guess about the future. If the Germans get the French ports (Calais, for example) the war will go on indefinitely. If they are held back, it *may* end next autumn or winter—partly because of starvation in Germany and partly because the Germans will have to confess that they can't whip our armies in France. But, even then, since they have all Russia to draw on, they may keep going for a long time. One man's guess is as good as another's.

One sad thing is certain: we shall at once begin to have heavy American casualties. Our Red Cross and our army here are getting hospitals ready for such American

wounded as are brought over to England—the parts of our army that are fighting with the British.

We have a lot of miserable politics here which interfere with the public feeling. The British politician is a worse yellow dog than the American—at times he is, at least; and we have just been going through such a time. Another such time will soon come about the Irish.

Well, we have an unending quantity of work and wear—no very acute bothers but a continuous strain, the strain of actual work, of uneasiness, of seeing people, of uncertainty, of great expense, of doubt and fear at times, of inability to make any plans—all which is only the common lot now all over the world, except that most persons have up to this time suffered incomparably worse than we. And there's nothing to do but to go on and on and on and to keep going with the stoutest hearts we can keep up till the end do at last come. But the Germans now (as the rest of us) are fighting for their lives. They are desperate and their leaders care nothing for human life.

The Embassy now is a good deal bigger than the whole State Department ever was in times of peace. I have three buildings for offices, and a part of our civil force occupies two other buildings. Even a general supervision of so large a force is in itself a pretty big job. The army and the Navy have each about the same space as the Embassy proper. Besides, our people have huts and inns and clubs and hospitals all over the town. Even though there be fewer vexing problems than there were while we were neutral, there is not less work—on the contrary, more. Nor will there be an end to it for a very long time—long after my time here. The settling of the war and the beginning of peace activities, whenever these come, will involve a great volume of work. But I've no ambition to have these things in hand. As soon as a natural time of

relief shall come, I'll go and be happier in my going than you or anybody else can guess.

Now we go to get my digestion stiffened up for another long tug—unless the Germans proceed forthwith to knock us out—which they cannot do.

With my love to everybody on the Hill,

Affectionately yours,

W. H. P.

Mr. and Mrs. Waldorf Astor—since become Viscount and Viscountess Astor—had offered the Pages the use of their beautiful seaside house at Sandwich, Kent, and it was the proposed vacation here to which Page refers in this letter. He obtained a six weeks' leave of absence and almost the last letters which Page wrote from England are dated from this place. These letters have all the qualities of Page at his best: but the handwriting is a sad reminder of the change that was progressively taking place in his physical condition. It is still a clear and beautiful script, but there are signs of a less steady hand than the one that had written the vigorous papers of the preceding four years.

### *Memorandum*

Sandwich, Kent, Sunday, 19 May, 1918.

We're at Rest Harrow and it's a fine, sunny early spring Carolina day. The big German drive has evidently begun its second phase. We hear the guns distinctly. We see the coast-guard aeroplanes at almost any time o' day. What is the mood about the big battle?

The soldiers—British and French—have confidence in their ability to hold the Germans back from the Channel and from Paris. Yet can one rely on the judgment of



soldiers? They have the job in hand and of course they believe in themselves. While one does not like in the least to discount their judgment and their hopefulness, for my part I am not *quite* so sure of their ability to make sound judgments as I wish I were. The chances are in favour of their success; but—suppose they should have to yield and give up Calais and other Channel ports? Well, they've prepared for it as best they can. They have made provision for commandeering most of the hotels in London that are not yet taken over—for hospitals for the wounded now in France.

And the war would take on a new phase. Whatever should become of the British and American armies, the Germans would be no nearer having England than they now are. They would not have command of the sea. The combined British and American fleets could keep every German ship off the ocean and continue the blockade by sea—indefinitely; and, if the peoples of the two countries hold fast, a victory would be won at last—at sea.

*To Ralph W. Page*

Rest Harrow, Sandwich, Kent.

May 19, 1918.

DEAR RALPH:

I felt very proud yesterday when I read T. R.'s good word in the *Outlook* about your book.<sup>1</sup> If I had written what he said myself—I mean, if I had written what *I* think of the book—I should have said this very thing. And there is one thing more I should have said, viz.:—All your life and all my life, we have cultivated the opinion at home that we had nothing to do with the rest of the

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<sup>1</sup>"Dramatic Moments in American Diplomacy," by Ralph W. Page, 1918.

world, nothing to do with Europe in particular—and in our political life our hayseed spokesmen have said this over and over again till many people, perhaps most people, came really to believe that it was true. Now this aloofness, this utterly detached attitude, was a pure invention of the shirt-sleeve statesman at home. I have long concluded, for other reasons as well as for this, that these men are the most ignorant men in the whole world; more ignorant—because they are viciously ignorant—than the Negro boys who act as caddies at Pinehurst; more ignorant than the inmates of the Morganton Asylum; more ignorant than sheep or rabbits or idiots. They have been the chief hindrances of our country—worse than traitors, in effect. It is they, in fact, who kept our people ignorant of the Germans, ignorant of the English, ignorant of our own history, ignorant of ourselves. Now your book, without mentioning the subject, shows this important fact clearly, by showing that our aloofness has all been a fiction. *We've been in the world—and right in the middle of the world—the whole time.*

And our public consciousness of this fact has enormously slipped back. Take Franklin, Madison, Monroe, Jefferson; take Hay, Root—and then consider some of our present representatives! One good result of the war and of our being in it will be the restoration of our foreign consciousness. Every one of the half million, or three million, soldiers who go to France will know more about foreign affairs than all Congress knew two years ago.

A stay of nearly five years in London (five years ago to-day I was on the ship coming here) with no absence long enough to give any real rest, have got my digestion wrong. I've therefore got a real leave for two months. Your mother and I have a beautiful house here that has been lent to us, right on the Channel where there's nothing

worth bombing and where as much sunshine and warmth come as come anywhere in England. We got here last night and to-day is as fine an early spring day as you ever had in the Sandhills. I shall golf and try to find me an old horse to ride, and I'll stay out in the sunshine and try to get the inside machinery going all right. We may have a few interruptions, but I hope not many, if the Germans leave us alone. Your mother has got to go to Newcastle to christen a new British warship—a compliment the Admiralty pays her "to bind the two nations closer together" etc. etc. And I've got to go to Cambridge to receive an LL. D. for the President. Only such things are allowed to interrupt us. And we are very much hoping to see Frank here.

We are in sound of the battle. We hear the big guns whenever we go outdoors. A few miles down the beach is a rifle range and we hear the practice there. Almost any time of day we can hear aeroplanes which (I presume) belong to the coast guard. There's no danger of forgetting the war, therefore, unless we become stone deaf. But this decent air and sunshine are blessings of the highest kind. I never became so **tired** of anything since I had the measles as I've become of London.

My Lord! it sounded last night as if we had jumped from the frying pan into the fire. Just as we were about to go to bed the big gun on the beach—just outside the fence around our yard—about 50 yards from the house, began its thundering belch—five times in quick succession, rattling the windows and shaking the very foundation of things. Then after a pause of a few minutes, another round of five shots. Then the other guns all along the beach took up the chorus—farther off—and the inland guns followed. They are planted all the way to London—ninety miles. For about two hours we had this roar

and racket. There was an air raid on, and there were supposed to be twenty-five or thirty German planes on their way to London. I hear that it was the worst raid that London has had. Two of them were brought down—that's the only good piece of news I've heard about it. Well, we are not supposed to be in danger. They fly over us on the way to bigger game. At any rate I'll take the risk for this air and sunshine. Trenches and barbed wire run all along the beach—I suppose to help in case of an invasion. But an invasion is impossible in my judgment. Holy Moses! what a world!—the cannon in the big battle in France roaring in our ears all the time, this cannon at our door likely to begin action any night and all the rest along the beach and on the way to London, and this is what we call rest! The world is upside down, all crazy, all murderous; but we've got to stop this barbaric assault, whatever the cost.

Ray Stannard Baker is spending a few days with us, much to our pleasure.

With love to Leila and the babies,

Yours affectionately,

W. H. P.

*To Arthur W. Page*

Rest Harrow, Sandwich Beach,  
Sandwich, Kent, England.

May 20, 1918.

DEAR ARTHUR:

. . . I can't get quite to the bottom of the anti-English feeling at Washington. God knows, this people have their faults. Their social system and much else here is mediæval. I could write several volumes in criticism of them. So I could also in criticism of anybody else.



But Jefferson's<sup>1</sup> letter is as true to-day as it was when he wrote it. One may or may not have a lot of sentiment about it; but, without sentiment, it's mere common sense, mere prudence, the mere instinct of safety to keep close to Great Britain, to have a decent respect for the good qualities of these people and of this government. Certainly it is a mere perversity—lost time—lost motion, lost everything—to cherish a dislike and a distrust of them—a thing that I cannot wholly understand. While we are, I fear, going to have trade troubles and controversies, my feeling is, on the whole, in spite of the attitude of our official life, that an increasing number of our people are waking up to what England has done and is and may be depended on to do. Isn't that true?

We've no news here. We see nobody who knows anything. I am far from strong—the old stomach got tired and I must gradually coax it back to work. That's practically my sole business now for a time, and it's a slow process. But it's coming along and relief from seeing hordes of people is as good as medicine.

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

*To the President*

Sandwich, May 24, 1918.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

Your speeches have a cumulative effect in cheering up the British. As you see, if you look over the mass of newspaper clippings that I send to the Department, or have them looked over, the British press of all parties and

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<sup>1</sup>The reference is to a letter written in 1823 by Thomas Jefferson to President Monroe at the time when the Holy Alliance was threatening the independence of South America. "With Great Britain," Jefferson wrote, "we should most sedulously cherish a cordial friendship and nothing would tend more to knit our affections than to be fighting once more, side by side, in the same cause."

shades of opinion constantly quote them approvingly and gratefully. They have a cumulative effect, too, in clearing the atmosphere. Take, for instance, your declaration in New York about standing by Russia. All the allied governments in Europe wish to stand by Russia, but their pressing business with the war, near at hand, causes them in a way to forget Russia; and certainly the British public, all intent on the German "drive" in France had in a sense forgotten Russia. You woke them up. And your "Why set a limit to the American Army?" has had a cheering effect. As leader and spokesman of the enemies of Germany—by far the best trumpet-call spokesman and the strongest leader—your speeches are worth an army in France and more, for they keep the proper moral elevation. All this is gratefully recognized here. Public opinion toward us is wholesome and you have a "good press" in this Kingdom. In this larger matter, all is well. The English faults are the failings of the smaller men—about smaller matters—not of the large men nor of the public, about large matters.

In private, too, thoughtful Englishmen by their fears pay us high tribute. I hear more and more constantly such an opinion as this: "You see, when the war is over, you Americans will have much the largest merchant fleet. You will have much the largest share of money, and England and France and all the rest of the world will owe you money. You will have a large share of essential raw materials. You will have the machinery for marine insurance and for foreign banking. You will have much the largest volume of productive labour. And you will know the world as you have never known it before. What then is going to become of British trade?"

The best answer I can give is: "Adopt American methods of manufacture, and the devil take the hind-

most. There will be for a long time plenty for everybody to do; and let us make sure that we both play the game fairly: that's the chief matter to look out for." That's what I most fear in the decades following the end of the war—trade clashes.

The Englishman's pride will be hurt. I recall a speech made to me by the friendliest of the British—Mr. Balfour himself: "I confess that as an Englishman it hurts my pride to have to borrow so much even from you. But I will say that I'd rather be in your debt than in anybody else's."

*To Edward M. House*

May 27, 1918.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

. . . I can write in the same spirit of the Labour Group which left for home last week. Nobody has been here from our side who had a better influence than they. They emphatically stuck by their instructions and took pleasure, against the blandishments of certain British Socialists, in declaring against any meeting with anybody from the enemy countries to discuss "peace-by-negotiation" or anything else till the enemy is whipped. They made admirable speeches and proved admirable representatives of the bone and sinew of American manhood. They had dead-earnestness and good-humour and hard horse-sense.

This sort of visit is all to the good. Great good they do, too, in the present English curiosity to see and hear the right sort of frank, candid Americans. Nobody who hasn't been here lately can form an idea of the eagerness of all classes to hear and learn about the United States. There never was, and maybe never will be again, such a chance to inform the British and—to help them toward a right understanding of the United States and our people.

We are not half using the opportunity. There seems to be a feeling on your side the ocean that we oughtn't to send men here to "lecture" the British. No typical, earnest, sound American who has been here has "lectured" the British. They have all simply told facts and instructed them and won their gratitude and removed misconceptions. For instance, I have twenty inquiries a week about Dr. Buttrick. He went about quietly during his visit here and talked to university audiences and to working-men's meetings and he captured and fascinated every man he met. He simply told them American facts, explained the American spirit and aims and left a grateful memory everywhere. Buttrick cost our Government nothing: he paid his own way. But if he had cost as much as a regiment it would have been well spent. The people who heard him, read American utterances, American history, American news in a new light. And most of his talk was with little groups of men, much of it even in private conversation. He did no orating or "lecturing." A hundred such men, if we had them, would do more for a perfect understanding with the British people than anything else whatsoever could do.

Yours sincerely,

WALTER H. PAGE.

*To Arthur W. Page*

Sandwich, May 27, 1918.

DEAR ARTHUR:

. . . I do get tired—my Lord! how tired!—not of the work but of the confinement, of the useless things I have to spend time on, of the bad digestion that has overtaken me, of London, of the weather, of absence from you all—of the general breaking up of the world, of this mad slaughter of men. But, after all, this is the common lot



now and I am grateful for a chance to do what I can. That's the true way to look at it.

. . . Worry? I don't worry about anything except the war in general and this mad world so threatened by these devil barbarians. And I have a feeling that, when we get a few thousand flying machines, we'll put an end to that, alas! with the loss of many of our brave boys. I hear the guns across the channel as I write—an unceasing boom! boom! boom! That's what takes the stuff out of me and gets my inside machinery wrong. Still, I'm gradually getting even that back to normal. Golf and the poets are fine medicine. I read Keats the other day, with entire forgetfulness of the guns. Here we have a comfortable house, our own servants (as many as we need), a beautiful calm sea, a perfect air and for the present ideal weather. There's nobody down here but Scottish soldiers. We've struck up a pleasant acquaintance with them; and some of the fellows from the Embassy come down week ends. Only the murderous guns keep their eternal roar.

Thanks, thanks, a thousand thanks, old man. It'll all work out right.

. . . I look at it in this way: all's well that ends well. We are now doing our duty. That's enough. These things don't bother me, because doing our duty now is worth a million years of past errors and shortcomings.

Your mother's well and spry—very, and the best company in the world. We're having a great time.

Bully for the kids! Kiss 'em for me and Mollie too.

Affectionately,

W. H. P.

Make Shoecraft tell you everything. He's one of the best boys and truest in the world.

*To Ralph W. Page*

Rest Harrow, Sandwich, Kent.

June 7, 1918.

MY DEAR RALPH:

. . . I have all along cherished an expectation of two things—(1) That when we did get an American Army by conscription, if it should remain at war long enough to learn the game, it would become the best army that the world ever saw, for the simple reason that its ranks would contain more capable men than any other country has ever produced. The proof of this comes at once. Even our new and raw troops have astonished the veterans of the French and British armies and (I have no doubt) of the German Army also. It'll be our men who will whip the Germans, and there are nobody else's men who could do it. We've already saved the Entente from collapse by our money. We'll save the day again by our fighting men. That is to say, we'll save the world, thank God; and I fear it couldn't have been saved in any other way. (2) Since the people by their mood command and compel efficiency, the most efficient people will at last (as recent events show) get at the concrete jobs, in spite of anybody's preferences or philosophy. And this seems at last to be taking place. What we have suffered and shall suffer is not failure but delays and delays and bunglings. But they've got to end by the sheer pressure of the people's earnestness. These two things, then, are all to the good.

I get the morning papers here at noon. And to-day I am all alone. Your mother went early on her journey to launch a British battleship. I haven't had a soul to speak to all day but my servants. At noon, therefore, I was rather eager for the papers. I saw at a glance that a submarine is at work off the New Jersey coast! It's an

awful thing for the innocent victims, to be drowned. But their deaths have done us a greater service than 100 times as many lives lost in battle. If anybody lacked earnestness about the war, I venture to guess that he doesn't lack it any longer. If the fools would now only shell some innocent town on the coast, the journey to Berlin would be shortened.

If the Germans had practised a chivalrous humanity in their war for conquest, they'd have won it. Nothing on earth can now save them; for the world isn't big enough to hold them and civilized people. Nor is there any room for pacifists till this grim business is done.

Affectionately,  
W. H. P.

The last piece of writing from Sandwich is the following memorandum:

Sandwich, Kent.

June 10, 1918.

The Germans continue to gain ground in France—more slowly, but still they gain. The French and British papers now give space to plans for the final defense—the desperate defense—of Paris. The Germans are only forty miles away. Slocum, military attaché, thinks they will get it and he reports the same opinion at the War Office—because the Germans have taken such a large number of guns and so much ammunition. Some of these guns were meant for the American troops, and they cannot now be replaced in time if the German advance continues. But I do not know enough facts at first hand to form an opinion. But, if Paris be taken, the war will go on a long time—unless the English-speaking rulers make a compromise. And, then, in another form—and forms—it'll go on indefinitely.—There has been no more perilous or uncertain or anxious time than now.

The United States too late, too late, too late: what if it should turn out so?

But it did not turn out so. Even while Page was penning these lines great events were taking place in France and the American troops were having a large share in them. In June the Americans stopped the German troops at Belleau Wood—a battle which proved the mettle of these fresh levies not only for the benefit of the Germans but of the Allies as well. Thus Page had the great satisfaction of returning to London while the city was ringing with the praise of these achievements. He found that the atmosphere had materially changed since he had last been in the British capital; when he had left for Sandwich there had been a general expectation that the Germans would get Paris or the Channel ports; now, however, there was every confidence of victory. Greatly as Page rejoiced over the new prospect, however, the fight at Belleau Wood brought him his last great sorrow. His nephew, Allison M. Page, of Aberdeen, North Carolina, the son of his youngest brother, Frank, lost his life in that engagement. At first the young man was reported “missing”; the investigation set afoot by the Ambassador for some time brought no definite information. One of the most pathetic of Page’s papers is a brief note addressed by him to Allison Page, asking him for news: “It’s been a long time since we heard from you,” Page wrote his nephew. “Write how it goes with you. Affectionately, Uncle Wat.” After travelling over a considerable part of France, this note found its way back to the Embassy. The boy—he was only 19—had been killed in action near Belleau Wood, on June 25th, while leading his detachment in an attack on a machine gun. Citations and decorations for gallantry in action were given post-



humously by General Pershing, Marshal Pétain, Major-General Omar Bundy, and Major-General John A. LeJeune.

And now the shadows began to close in rapidly on Page. In early July Major Frank C. Page, the Ambassador's youngest son, came over from France. A brief glance at his father convinced him that he was dying. By this time the Ambassador had ceased to go to the Chancery, but was transacting the most imperative business propped up in a chair at home. His mind was possessed by two yearnings: one was to remain in London until the end of the war, the other was to get back to his childhood home in North Carolina. Young Page urged his father to resign, but the weary invalid insisted on sticking to his post. On this point it seemed impossible to move him. Knowing that his brother Arthur had great influence with his father, Frank Page cabled, asking him to come to England immediately. Arthur took the first boat, reaching London late in July.

The Ambassador's two sons then gently pressed upon their father the fact that he must resign. Weak as he was, the Ambassador was still obdurate.

"No," he said. "It's quitting on the job. I must see the war through. I can't quit until it's over."

But Sir William Osler, Page's physician and devoted friend, exercised his professional authority and insisted on the resignation. Finally Page consented.

### *To the President*

American Embassy, London,  
August 1, 1918.

MY DEAR MR. PRESIDENT:

I have been struggling for a number of months against the necessity to write you this note; for my doctors now advise me to give up all work for a period—my London

doctor says for six months. I have a progressive digestive trouble which does not yield to the usual treatment. It's the war, five London winters, and the unceasing labour which is now the common lot. I am ashamed to say that these have brought me to something near a breakdown. I have had Sir William Osler as well as two distinguished London physicians for several months. The digestive trouble has brought other ills in its train; and I am assured that they will yield to freedom from responsibility and complete rest for a time in a dry, warm climate and that they are not likely to yield to anything else.

I see nothing else to do then but to bow to the inevitable and to ask you to be kind enough to relieve me and to accept my resignation to take effect as soon as I can go to Washington and make a somewhat extended report on the work here, which, I hope, will be of some use to the Department; and I ought to go as soon as possible—say, in September. I cannot tell you how great my disappointment is that this request has become necessary.

If the world and its work were so organized that we could do what we should like to do, I should like a leave of absence till winter be broken and then to take up my duties here again till the war end. But that, of course, is impracticable. And it is now a better time to change Ambassadors than at any time since the war began. My five years' service has had two main phases—the difficult period of our neutrality and the far easier period since we came into the war. But when the war ends, I fear that there will be again more or less troublesome tasks arising out of commercial difficulties.

But for any reasonable period the Embassy's work fortunately can now go on perfectly well with Mr. Laughlin as Chargé—until my successor can get here. The Foreign Office like him, he is *persona grata* to all other Departments

of the Government, and he has had a long experience; and he is most conscientious and capable. And the organization is in excellent condition.

I venture to ask you to have a cable message sent to me (to be deciphered by me alone). It will require quite a little time to pack up and to get away.

I send this, Mr. President, with more regret than I can express and only after a struggle of more than six months to avoid it.

Yours sincerely,

WALTER H. PAGE.

Arthur Page took his father to Banff, in Scotland, for a little rest in preparation for the voyage. From this place came Page's last letter to his wife:

*To Mrs. Page*

Duff House, Banff, Scotland.

Sunday, September 2, 1918.

MY DEAR:

. . . I've put the period of our life in London, in my mind, as closed. That epoch is ended. And I am glad. It was time it ended. My job (*that* job) is done. From the letters that Shoecraft has sent me and from what the papers say, I think I couldn't have ended it more happily—or at a better time. I find myself thinking of the winter down South—of a Thanksgiving Day dinner for the older folks of our family, of a Christmas tree for the kids, of frolics of all sorts, of Rest, of some writing (perhaps not much), going over my papers with Ralph—that's what he wants, you know; etc., etc., etc.—

And I've got to eat more. *I* myself come into my thinking and planning in only two ways—(1) I'm going to have

a suit like old Lord N.'s and (2) I'm going to get all the good things to eat that there are!

Meantime, my dear, how are you? Don't you let this getting ready wear you out. Let something go undone rather. Work Miss Latimer and the boys and the moving and packing men, and Petherick and the servants. Take it very easy yourself.

Nine and a half more days here—may they speed swiftly. Comfortable as I am, I'm mortal tired of being away from you—dead tired.

Praise God it's only  $9\frac{1}{2}$  days. If it were  $9\frac{3}{4}$ , I should not stand it, but break for home prematurely.

Yours, dear Allie, with all my love,

W. H. P.

On August 24th came the President's reply:

I have received your communication of August 1st. It caused me great regret that the condition of your health makes it necessary for you to resign. Under the circumstances I do not feel I have the right to insist on such a sacrifice as your remaining in London. Your resignation is therefore accepted. As you request it will take effect when you report to Washington. Accept my congratulations that you have no reason to fear a permanent impairment of your health and that you can resign knowing that you have performed your difficult duties with distinguished success.

WOODROW WILSON.

The news of Page's resignation inspired tributes from the British press and from British public men such as have been bestowed upon few Americans. The London *Times* headed its leader "A Great Ambassador" and this note,



was echoed in all sections of Great Britain. The part of Page's career which Englishmen chiefly recalled was his attitude during the period of neutrality. This, the newspapers declared, was Page's great contribution to the cause. The fact that it had had such far-reaching influences on history was the one especially insisted on. His conciliatory and skillful behaviour had kept the United States and Great Britain friends at a time when a less tactful ambassador might easily have made them enemies; the result was that, when the time came, the United States could join forces against the common enemy, with results that were then daily unfolding on the battlefields of France. "I really believe," wrote the Marquess of Crewe, "that there were several occasions when we might have made it finally impossible for America to join us in the war; that these passed by may have been partly due to some glimmering of common sense on our part, with Grey as its main exponent; but it was more largely owing to your patience and courtesy and to the certainty which the Foreign Office always enjoyed that its action would be set before the Secretary of State in as favourable a light as it conscientiously could be." That, then, was Page's contribution to the statesmanship of this crisis—that of holding the two countries together so that, when the time came, the United States could join the Allies. A mass of private letters, all breathing the same sentiment, began to pour in on Page. There was hardly an illustrious name in Great Britain that was not represented among these leave-takings. As illustrating the character and spirit animating them, the following selections are made:

*From the King*

The information communicated to me yesterday through Mr. Laughlin of Your Excellency's resignation of

the Post of Ambassador and the cause of this step fill me with the keenest regret. During your term of office in days of peace and of war your influence has done much to strengthen the ties of friendship and good-will which unite the two English-speaking nations of the world. I trust your health will soon be restored and that we may have the pleasure of seeing you and Mrs. Page before your departure.

GEORGE R. I.

*From the Prime Minister*

10, Downing Street, Whitehall, S. W. 1.  
30th August, 1918.

MY DEAR AMBASSADOR:

It is with the deepest regret that my colleagues and I have received the news that you have been forced by ill health to resign your office and that the President has consented to your relinquishing your ambassadorial duties. We are sorry that you are leaving us, all the more because your tenure of office has coincided with one of the greatest epochs in the history of our two countries and of the world, and because your influence and counsel throughout this difficult time have been of the utmost value to us all.

The power for good or evil which can be exerted by the occupant of your high position is at all times necessarily very great. That our peoples are now fighting side by side in the cause of human freedom and that they are manifesting an ever growing feeling of cordiality to one another is largely attributable to the exceptional wisdom and good-will with which you have discharged your duties. For the part you have played during the past five years in bringing about this happy result we owe you our lasting gratitude.

May I add that while you have always firmly presented the point of view of your own country, you have succeeded in winning, not only the respect and admiration of official circles, but the confidence, and I can say without hesitation, the affection of all sections of our people? It will be with universal regret that they will learn that, owing to the strain of the great responsibilities you have borne, you are no longer to remain among us. I earnestly trust that a well-earned rest will speedily restore you to complete health, and that you have many years of public service still in store for you.

I should like also to say how much we shall miss Mrs. Page. She has won a real place in all our hearts. Through her unflinching tact, her genuine kindness, and her unvarying readiness to respond to any call upon her time and energy, she has greatly contributed to the success of your ambassadorship.

Ever sincerely,

D. LLOYD GEORGE.

*From Viscount Grey of Fallodon*

Glen Innerleithen, Scotland.

September 2, 1918.

DEAR MR. PAGE:

I have been out of touch with current events for a few days, but yesterday I read the two articles in the *Times* on your retirement. I am very grieved to think that you are going. There was not a word of eulogy in the *Times* articles that was not under rather than over-stated, and reflecting thus I thought how rare it is in public life to have an occasion that justifies the best that can be said. But it is so now, and I am filled with deep regret that you are going and with deep gratitude that you came to us and were here when the war broke out and subsequently. If

the United States had been represented here by any one less decided as to the right and wrong of the war and less firm and courageous than yourself, the whole of the relations between your country and ours would have been in peril. And if the two countries had gone apart instead of coming together the whole fate of the world would be very different from what I hope it will now be.

I have often thought that the forces behind public affairs are so tremendous that individuals have little real, even when much apparent, influence upon the course of events. But in the early years of the war I think everything might have gone wrong if it had not been that certain men of strong moral conviction were in certain places. And you were preëminently one of these. President Wilson I am sure was another, though I know him only through you and Colonel House and his own public utterances. Even so your influence must have counted in his action, by your friendship with him as well as by the fact of your being the channel through which communications passed between him and us.

I cannot adequately express what it was to me personally in the dark days of 1914, 1915, and 1916 to know how you felt about the great issues involved in the war.

I go to Fallodon at the end of this week and come to London the first week of September—if you and Mrs. Page have not left by then I hope I may see you. I long to do so before you go. I wish you may recover perfect health. My eyesight continues to fail and I shall soon be absolutely dependent upon other eyes for reading print. Otherwise I feel as well as a schoolboy, but it is depressing to be so well and yet so crippled in sight.

Please do not trouble to answer this letter—you must have too many letters of the kind to be able to reply to them separately—but if there is a chance of my seeing



you before you go please let me have a message to say when and where.

Yours sincerely,

GREY OF F.

A few months before his resignation Page had received a letter from Theodore Roosevelt, who was more familiar than most Americans with Page's work in London. This summed up what will be probably the judgment of history upon his ambassadorship. The letter was in reply to one written to the Ex-President, asking him to show hospitality to the Archbishop of York,<sup>1</sup> who was about to visit the United States.

(Office of the Metropolitan Magazine)  
342 Fourth Ave., New York,  
March 1st, 1918.

MY DEAR MR. AMBASSADOR:

I am very much pleased with your letter, and as soon as the Archbishop arrives, he will be addressed by me with all his titles, and I will get him to lunch with me or dine with me, or do anything else he wishes! I shall do it for his own sake, and still more, my dear fellow, I shall do it for the sake of the Ambassador who has represented America in London during these trying years as no other Ambassador in London has ever represented us, with the exception of Charles Francis Adams, during the Civil War.

Faithfully yours,

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.

The seriousness of Page's condition was not understood in London; consequently there were many attempts to do

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<sup>1</sup>See Vol. II, page 307.

him honour in which he was unable to participate. Custom demands that a retiring Ambassador shall go to Windsor Castle to dine and to sleep; but King George, who was very solicitous about Page's health, offered to spare the Ambassador this trip and to come himself to London for this leave-taking. However, Page insisted on carrying out the usual programme; but the visit greatly tired him and he found it impossible personally to take part in any further official farewells. The last ceremony was a visit from the Lord Mayor and Council of Plymouth, who came to the Ambassador's house in September to present the freedom of the city. Ever since Page's speech of August 4, 1917, Plymouth had been planning to do him this honour; when the Council heard that the Ambassador's health would make it impossible for him to visit Plymouth, they asked if they might not come to London. The proceeding was most impressive and touching and the Ambassador's five-minute speech, the last one which he made in England, had all his old earnestness and mental power, though the physical weakness of the man saddened everybody present. The Lord Mayor presented the freedom of the ancient borough in a temporary holder, explaining that a more permanent receptacle would follow the Ambassador to America. When this arrived, it proved to be a beautiful silver model of the *Mayflower*. Certainly there could have been no more appropriate farewell gift to Page from the English town whose name so closely links the old country with the United States.

The last scene took place at Waterloo Station. Sir Arthur Walsh came representing the King, while Mr. Balfour, Lord Robert Cecil, and other ministers represented the cabinet. The Government had provided a special railway carriage, and this was stationed at a convenient place as Page's motor drew up. So weak was

the Ambassador that it was with difficulty that his companions, the ever devoted Mr. Laughlin, on one side, and Page's secretary, Mr. Shoecraft, on the other, succeeded in supporting him to his chair. Mr. Balfour, Lord Robert Cecil and the others then entered the carriage, and, with all that sympathetic dignity in which Englishmen of this type excel, said a few gracious and affectionate words of good-bye. They all stood, with uncovered heads, as the train slowly pulled out of the station, and caught their final glimpse of Page as he smiled at them and faintly waved his hand.

Perhaps the man most affected by this leave-taking was Mr. Balfour. He knew, as did the others, that that frail and emaciated figure had been one of the greatest friends that Britain had had at the most dreadful crisis in her history. He has many times told of this parting scene at Waterloo Station and always with emotion.

"I loved that man," he once said to an American friend, recalling this event. "I almost wept when he left England."

## CHAPTER XXVII

### THE END

PAGE came home only to die. In fact, at one time it seemed improbable that he would live to reach the United States. The voyage of the *Olympic*, on which he sailed, was literally a race with death. The great-hearted Captain, Sir Bertram Hayes, hearing of the Ambassador's yearning to reach his North Carolina home, put the highest pressure upon his ship, which almost leaped through the waves. But for a considerable part of the trip Page was too ill to have much consciousness of his surroundings. At times he was delirious; once more he lived over the long period of "neutrality"; again he was discussing intercepted cargoes and "notes" with Sir Edward Grey; from this his mind would revert to his English literary friends, and then again he was a boy in North Carolina. The *Olympic* reached New York more than a day ahead of schedule; Page was carried down the gangplank on a stretcher, propped up with pillows; and since he was too weak then to be taken to his Southern home, he was placed temporarily in St. Luke's Hospital. Page arrived on a beautiful sunshiny October day; Fifth Avenue had changed its name in honour of the new Liberty Loan and had become the "Avenue of the Allies"; each block, from Forty-second Street north, was decorated with the colours of one of the nations engaged in the battle against Germany; the street was full of Red Cross workers and other picturesquely clad enthusiasts selling Liberty Bonds; in its animated beauty and in its inspiring signi-



ficance it formed an appropriate setting for Page's homecoming.

The American air seemed to act like a tonic on Page; in a short time he showed such improvement that his recovery seemed not impossible. So far as his spirits and his mind were concerned, he became his old familiar self. He was able to see several of his old friends, he read the newspapers and discussed the international situation with his customary liveliness. With the assistance of his daughter, Mrs. Loring, he even kept track of his correspondence. Evidently the serious nature of his illness was not understood, for invitations to speak poured in from all quarters. Most of these letters Mrs. Loring answered, but there was one that Page insisted on attending to himself. The City of Cleveland was organizing some kind of a meeting dedicated to closer relations with Great Britain, and the Mayor wrote Page asking him to speak. The last thing which Page wrote with his own hand was his reply to this invitation; and it is an impressive fact that his final written word should have dealt with the subject that had been so close to his heart for the preceding five years.

*To Harry L. Davis, Mayor of Cleveland, Ohio*

I deeply regret my health will not permit me to attend any public function for some time to come; for I deeply appreciate your invitation on behalf of the City of Cleveland for the meeting on December 7th, and have a profound sympathy with its purpose to bring the two great English-speaking worlds as close together as possible, so that each shall thoroughly understand the courage and sacrifice and ideals of the other. This is the greatest political task of the future. For such a complete and lasting understanding is the only basis for the continued

progress of civilization. I am proud to be associated in your thought, Mr. Mayor, with so fitting and happy an occasion, and only physical inability could cause absence.

Sincerely,

WALTER H. PAGE.

Page's improvement was only temporary; a day or two after this letter was written he began to sink rapidly; it was therefore decided to grant his strongest wish and take him to North Carolina. He arrived in Pinehurst on December 12th, so weak that his son Frank had to carry him in his arms from the train.

"Well, Frank," said Page, with a slightly triumphant smile, "I did get here after all, didn't I?"

He lingered for a few days and died, at eight o'clock in the evening, on December 21st, in his sixty-fourth year. He suffered no pain. He was buried in the Page family plot in the Bethesda Cemetery near Aberdeen.

He was as much of a war casualty as was his nephew Allison Page, who lost his life with his face to the German machine guns in Belleau Wood.

THE END

## APPENDIX

### SCRAPS FROM UNFINISHED DIARIES

PAGE was not methodical in keeping diaries. His documents, however, reveal that he took many praiseworthy resolutions in this direction. They include a large number of bulky books, each labelled "Diary" and inscribed with the year whose events were to be recorded. The outlook is a promising one; but when the books are opened they reveal only fragmentary good intentions. Entries are kept up for a few days, and then the work comes to an end. These volumes contain many scraps of interesting writing, however, which are worth preserving; some of them are herewith presented in haphazard fashion, with no attempt at order in subject matter.

1913

PETHERICK

PETHERICK: may he be immortal; for he is a man who has made of a humble task a high calling; and without knowing it he has caused a man of a high calling to degrade it to a mean level. Now Petherick is a humble Englishman, whose father many years ago enjoyed the distinction of carrying the mail pouch to and from the post office for the American Embassy in London. As father, so son. Petherick succeeded Petherick. In this remote period (*the* Petherick must now be 60) Governments had "despatch agents," men who distributed mail

and whatnot, sent it on from capital to capital—were a sort of general “forwarding” factotums. The office is really out of date now. Telegraph companies, express companies, railway companies, the excellent mail service and the like out-despatch any conceivable agent—except Petherick. Petherick has qualities that defy change, such as an unfailing courtesy, a genuine joy in serving his fellows, the very genius of helpfulness. Well, since a governmental office once established acquires qualities of perpetuity, three United States despatch agents have survived the development of modern communication, one in London, one in New York, and the third (I think) in San Francisco. At any rate, the London agent remains.

Now in the beginning the London despatch agent was a mail messenger (as I understand) for the Embassy. He still takes the pouch to the post office, and brings it back. In ordinary times, that’s all he does for the Embassy, for which his salary of about \* \* \* is paid by the State Department—too high a salary for the labour done, but none too high for the trustworthy qualities required. If this had been all that Petherick did, he would probably have long ago gone to the scrap heap. It is one mark of a man of genius that he always makes his job. So Petherick. The American Navy came into being and parts of it come to this side of the world. Naval officers need help when they come ashore. Petherick was always on hand with despatches and mail for them, and Petherick was a handy man. Did the Captain want a cab? Petherick had one waiting. Did the Captain want rooms? Such-and-such a hotel was the proper one for him. Rooms were engaged. Did the Captain’s wife need a maid? Petherick had thought of that, too. Then a Secretary from some continental legation wished to know a good London tailor.



He sought Petherick. An American Ambassador from the continent came to London. London yielded Petherick for his guidance and his wants. Petherick became omnipresent, universally useful—an American institution in fact. A naval officer who had been in Asiatic waters was steaming westward to the Mediterranean. His wife and three babies came to London, where she was to meet her husband, who was to spend several weeks here. A telegram to Petherick: they needed to do nothing else. When the lady arrived a furnished flat, a maid and a nurse and a cook and toys awaited her. When her husband arrived, a pair of boots awaited him from the same last that his last pair had been made on, in London, five years before. At some thoughtful moment \$1,000 was added to Petherick's salary by the Navy Department; and a few years ago a handsome present was made to Petherick by the United States Naval Officers all over the world.

But Petherick, with all his virtues, is merely an Englishman, and it is not usual for an Englishman to hold a \$3,000 office under appointment from the United States Government. The office of despatch agent, therefore, has been nominally held by an American citizen in London. This American citizen for a good many years has been Mr. Crane, a barrister, who simply turns over the salary to Petherick; and all the world, except the Secretary of State, knows that Petherick is Petherick and there is none other but him.

Now comes the story: Mr. Bryan, looking around the world for offices for his henchmen, finds that one Crane has been despatch agent in London for many years, and he writes me a personal and confidential letter, asking if this be not a good office for some Democrat!

I tell the story to the Naval Attaché! He becomes

riotous. He'll have to employ half a dozen clerks to do for the Navy ill what Petherick does well with ease, if he's removed. Life would not be worth living anyhow. I uncover Petherick to the Secretary and show him in his glory. It must be said to the Secretary's credit that he has said nothing more about it. Petherick, let us hope, will live forever. The Secretary's petty-spoils mind now works on grand plans for Peace, holy Peace, having unsuccessfully attacked poor Petherick. And Petherick knows nothing about it and never dreams of an enemy in all the world, and in all naval and diplomatic life he has only fast friends. If Mr. Bryan had removed him, he might have made a temporary friend of one Democrat from Oklahoma, and lasting enemies of all that Democrat's rivals and of the whole naval and diplomatic service.

*November, 1914.*

We have to get away from it—or try to—a minute at a time; and the comic gods sometimes help us. Squier<sup>1</sup> has a junior officer here to hold his desk down when he's gone. He's a West Point Lieutenant with a German name. His study is ordnance. A new kind of bomb gives him the same sort of joy that a new species would have given Darwin. He was over in France—where the armies had passed to and from Paris—and one day he found an unexploded German bomb of a new sort. The thing weighed half a ton or thereabouts, and it was loaded. Somehow he got it to London—I never did hear how. He wrapped it in blankets and put it under his bed. He went out of town to study some other infernal contraption and the police found this thing under his bed. The War Office took it and began to look for him—to shoot him, the

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<sup>1</sup>Colonel (now Major General) George O. Squier, Military Attaché at the American Embassy.

bomb-harbouring German! They soon discovered, of course, that he was one of our men and an officer in the United States Army. Then I heard of it for the first time. Here came a profuse letter of apology from the Government; they had not known the owner was one of my attachés. Pardon, pardon—a thousand apologies. But while this letter was being delivered to me one of the under-secretaries of the Government was asking one of our secretaries, “In Heaven’s name, what’s the Ambassador going to do about it? We have no right to molest the property of one of your attachés, but this man’s room is less than 100 yards from Westminster Abbey: it might blow up half of London. We can’t give the thing back to him!” They had taken it to the Duck Pond, wherever that is. About that time the Lieutenant came back. His pet bomb gone—what was I going to do about it?

The fellow actually wanted to bring it to his office in the Embassy!

“Look here, Lieutenant, besides the possibility of blow-up this building and killing every mother’s son of us, consider the scandal of the American Embassy in London blown up by a German bomb. That would go down in the school histories of the United States. Don’t you see?” No, he didn’t see instantly—he does so love a bomb! I had to threaten to disown him and let him be shot before he was content to go and tell them to unload it—he *would* have it, unloaded, if not loaded.

Well, I had to write half a dozen letters before the thing was done for. He thinks me a chicken-livered old coward and I know much more about him than I knew before; and we are at peace. The newspapers never got the story, but his friends about town still laugh at him for trying first to blow up Westminster Abbey and then his own Ambassador. He was at my house at dinner the

other night and one of the ladies asked him: "Lieutenant, have you any darling little pet lyddite cartridges in your pocket?" Think of a young fellow who just loves bombs! Has loaded bombs for pets! How I misspent my youth!

*February, 1915.*

This is among the day's stories: The British took a ship that had a cargo of 100,000 busts of Von Hindenburg—filled with copper.

Another: When Frederick Watts was painting Lord Minto he found it hard to make the portrait please him. When he was told that Lord Minto liked it and Lady Minto didn't and that So-and-So praised it, he exclaimed: "I don't care a d—n what anyone thinks about it—except a fellow named Sargent."

And the King said (about the wedding<sup>1</sup>): "I have the regulation of the dress to be worn at all functions in the Chapel Royal. I, therefore, declare that the American Ambassador may have any dress worn that he pleases!"

E. M. House went to Paris this morning, having no peace message from this Kingdom whatever. This kind of talk here now was spoken of by the Prime Minister the other day "as the twittering of a sparrow in a tumult that shakes the world."

Lady P. remarked to me to-day, as many persons do, that I am very fortunate to be Ambassador here at this particular time. Perhaps; but it isn't easy to point out precisely wherein the good fortune consists. This much is certain: it is surely a hazardous occupation now. Henry James remarked, too, that nobody could afford to miss the experience of being here—nobody who could be here. Perhaps true, again; but I confess to enough shock and horror to keep me from being so very sure of that. Yet

<sup>1</sup>The wedding of Mr. Page's daughter at the Chapel Royal.



no other phenomenon is more noticeable than the wish of every sort of an American to be here. I sometimes wonder whether the really well-balanced American does. Most of them are of the overwrought and excitable kinds.

A conservative lady, quite conscientious, was taken down to dinner by Winston Churchill. Said she, to be quite frank and fair: "Mr. Churchill, I must tell you that I don't like your politics. Yet we must get on together. You may say, if you like, that this is merely a matter of personal taste with me, as I might not like your—well, your moustache." "I see no reason, Madam, why you should come in contact with either."

My talk with Bonar Law: He was disposed to believe that if England had declared at once that she would go to war with Germany if France was attacked, there would have been no war. Well, would English opinion, before Belgium was attacked, have supported a government which made such a declaration?

Mr. Bonar Law thinks that President Wilson ought to have protested about Belgium.

He didn't agree with me that much good human material goes to waste in this Kingdom for lack of opportunity. (That's the Conservative in him.)

*Friday, April 30, 1915.*

Sir Edward Grey came to tea to talk with Mr. House and me—little talk of the main subject (peace), which is not yet ripe by a great deal. Sir Edward said the Germans had poisoned wells in South Africa. They have lately used deadly gases in France. The key to their mind says Sir Edward, is this—they attribute to other folk what they are thinking of doing themselves.

While Sir Edward was here John Sargent came in and brought Katharine the charcoal portrait of her that he

had made—his present to her for her and Chud to give to W. A. W. P.<sup>1</sup> and me. A very graceful and beautiful thing for him to do.

*April 30, 1915.*

Concerning Peace: The German civil authorities want peace and so does one faction of the military party. But how can they save their face? They have made their people believe that they are at once the persecuted and the victorious. If they stop, how can they explain their stopping? The people might rend them. The ingenious loophole discovered by House is—mere moonshine, viz., the freedom of the seas in war. That is a one-sided proposition unless they couple with it the freedom of the land in war also, which is nonsense. Nothing can be done, then, until some unfavourable military event brings a new mind to the Germans. Peace talk, therefore, is yet mere moonshine. House has been to Berlin, from London, thence to Paris, then back to London again—from Nowhere (as far as peace is concerned) to Nowhere again.

*May 3, 1915.*

Why doesn't the President make himself more accessible? Dismiss X and get a bigger man? Take his cabinet members really into his confidence? Everybody who comes here makes these complaints of him!

We dined to-night at Y's. Professor M. was there, etc. He says we've got to have polygamy in Europe after the war to keep the race up.

*Friday, May 21, 1915.*

Last night the Italian Parliament voted to give the Government war-powers; and this means immediate war

<sup>1</sup>Mrs. Page.

Then, too, all sources of national irritation should be removed so what at first may be a sore spot cannot grow into a malignant disease.<sup>1</sup> It will not be too difficult, I think, to bring about an agreement that will insure permanent peace, provided all the nations of Europe are honest in their desire for it.

I am writing this to you with the President's knowledge and consent and with the thought that it will be conveyed to Sir Edward. There is a growing impatience in this country because of this war and there is constant pressure upon the President to use his influence to bring about normal conditions. He does not wish to do anything to irritate or offend any one of the belligerent nations, but he has an abiding faith in the efficacy of open and frank discussion between those that are now at war.

As far as I can see, no harm can be done by a dispassionate discussion at this stage, even though nothing comes of it. In a way, it is perhaps better that informal and unofficial conversations are begun and later the principals can take it up themselves.

I am sure that Sir Edward is too great a man to let any prejudices deter him from ending, as soon as possible, the infinite suffering that each day of war entails.

Faithfully yours,

E. M. HOUSE.

It is apparent that the failure of this first attempt at mediation discouraged neither Bernstorff nor the Washington administration. Colonel House was constantly meeting the German and the British Ambassadors; he was also, as his correspondence shows, in touch with Zimmermann, the German Under Foreign Secretary. The German desire for peace grew stronger in the autumn

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<sup>1</sup>Article 11 of the League Covenant reflects the influence of this idea.

and winter of 1914-1915, as the fact became more and more clear that Great Britain was summoning all her resources for the greatest effort in her history, as the stalemate on the Aisne more and more impressed upon the German chieftains the impossibility of obtaining any decision against the French Army, and as the Russians showed signs of great recuperation after the disaster of Tannenberg. By December 4th Washington had evidently made up its mind to move again.

*From Edward M. House*

115 East 53rd Street,  
New York City.  
December 4th, 1914.

DEAR PAGE:

The President desires to start peace parleys at the very earliest moment, but he does not wish to offend the sensibilities of either side by making a proposal before the time is opportune. He is counting upon being given a hint, possibly through me, in an unofficial way, as to when a proffer from him will be acceptable.

Pressure is being brought upon him to offer his services again, for this country is suffering, like the rest of the neutral world, from the effects of the war, and our people are becoming restless.

Would you mind conveying this thought delicately to Sir Edward Grey and letting me know what he thinks?

Would the Allies consider parleys upon a basis of indemnity for Belgium and a cessation of militarism? If so, then something may be begun with the Dual Alliance.

I have been told that negotiations between Russia and Japan were carried on several months before they agreed to meet at Portsmouth. The havoc that is being wrought in human lives and treasure is too great to permit racial



feeling or revenge to enter into the thoughts of those who govern the nations at war.

I stand ready to go to Germany at any moment in order to sound the temper of that government, and I would then go to England as I did last June.

This nation would not look with favour upon a policy that held nothing but the complete annihilation of the enemy.

Something must be done sometime, by somebody, to initiate a peace movement, and I can think of no way, at the moment, than the one suggested.

I will greatly appreciate your writing me fully and freely in regard to this phase of the situation.

Faithfully yours,  
E. M. HOUSE.

To this Page immediately replied:

*To Edward M. House*

December 12th, 1914.

MY DEAR HOUSE:

The English rulers have no feeling of vengeance. I have never seen the slightest traces of that. But they are determined to secure future safety. They will not have this experience repeated if they can help it. They realize now that they have been living under a sort of fear—or dread—for ten years: they sometimes felt that it was bound to come some time and then at other times they could hardly believe it. And they will spend all the men and all the money they have rather than suffer that fear again or have that danger. Now, if anybody could fix a basis for the complete restoration of Belgium, so far as restoration is possible, and for the elimination of militarism, I am sure the *English* would talk on that basis.

But there are two difficulties—Russia wouldn't talk till she has Constantinople, and I haven't found anybody who can say exactly what you mean by the "elimination of militarism." Disarmament? England will have her navy to protect her incoming bread and meat. How, then, can she say to Germany, "You can't have an army"?

You say the Americans are becoming "restless." The plain fact is that the English people, and especially the English military and naval people, don't care a fig what the Americans think and feel. They say, "We're fighting their battle, too—the battle of democracy and freedom from bureaucracy—why don't they come and help us in our life-and-death struggle?" I have a drawer full of letters saying this, not one of which I have ever answered. The official people never say that of course—nor the really responsible people, but a vast multitude of the public do. This feeling comes out even in the present military and naval rulers of this Kingdom—comes indirectly to me. A part of the public, then, and the military part of the Cabinet, don't longer care for American opinion and they resent even such a reference to peace as the President made in his Message to Congress.<sup>1</sup> But the civil part of the Cabinet and the responsible and better part of the public do care very much. The President's intimation about peace, however, got no real response here. They think he doesn't understand the meaning of the war. They don't want war; they are not a warlike people. They don't hate the Germans. There is no feeling of vengeance. They constantly say: "Why

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<sup>1</sup>From the President's second message to Congress, December 8, 1914: "It is our dearest present hope that this character and reputation may presently, in God's providence, bring us an opportunity, such as has seldom been vouchsafed any nation, to counsel and obtain peace in the world and reconciliation and a healing settlement of many a matter that has cooled and interrupted the friendship of nations."

do the Germans hate us? We don't hate them." But, since Germany set out to rule the world and to conquer Great Britain, they say, "We'll all die first." That's "all there is to it." And they will all die unless they can so fix things that this war cannot be repeated. Lady K—, as kindly an old lady as ever lived, said to me the other day: "A great honour has come to us. Our son has been killed in battle, fighting for the safety of England."

Now, the question which nobody seems to be able to answer is this: How can the military party and the military spirit of Germany be prevented from continuing to prepare for the conquest of Great Britain and from going to work to try it again? That implies a change in the form, spirit, and control of the German Empire. If they keep up a great army, they will keep it up with that end more or less in view. If the military party keeps in power, they will try it again in twenty-five or forty years. This is all that the English care about or think about.

They don't see how it is to be done themselves. All they see yet is that they must show the Germans that they can't whip Great Britain. If England wins decisively the English hope that somehow the military party will be overthrown in Germany and that the Germans, under peaceful leadership, will go about their business—industrial, political, educational, etc.—and quit dreaming of and planning for universal empire and quit maintaining a great war-machine, which at some time, for some reason, must attack somebody to justify its existence. This makes it difficult for the English to make overtures to or to receive overtures from this military war-party which now *is* Germany. But, if it be possible so completely to whip the war party that it will somehow be thrown out of power at home—that's the only way they now see out of it. To patch up a peace, leaving the

German war party in power, they think, would be only to invite another war.

If you can get over this point, you can bring the English around in ten minutes. But they are not going to take any chances on it. Read English history and English literature about the Spanish Armada or about Napoleon. They are acting those same scenes over again, having the same emotions, the same purpose: nobody must invade or threaten England. "If they do, we'll spend the last man and the last shilling. We value," they say truly, "the good-will and the friendship of the United States more than we value anything except our own freedom, but we'll risk even that rather than admit copper to Germany, because every pound of copper prolongs the war."

There you are. I've blinked myself blind and talked myself hoarse to men in authority—from Grey down—to see a way out—without keeping this intolerable slaughter up to the end. But they stand just where I tell you.

And the horror of it no man knows. The news is suppressed. Even those who see it and know it do not realize it. Four of the crack regiments of this kingdom—regiments that contained the flower of the land and to which it was a distinction to belong—have been practically annihilated, one or two of them annihilated twice. Yet their ranks are filled up and you never hear a murmur. Presently it'll be true that hardly a title or an estate in England will go to its natural heir—the heir has been killed. Yet, not a murmur; for England is threatened with invasion. They'll all die first. It will presently be true that more men will have been killed in this war than were killed before in all the organized wars since the Christian era began. The English are willing and eager to stop it if things can be so fixed that there will be



no military power in Europe that wishes or prepares to attack and invade England.

I've had many one-hour, two-hour, three-hour talks with Sir Edward Grey. He sees nothing further than I have written. He says to me often that if the United States could see its way to cease to protest against stopping war materials from getting into Germany, they could end the war more quickly—all this, of course, informally; and I say to him that the United States will consider any proposal you will make that does not infringe on a strict neutrality. Violate a rigid neutrality we will not do. And, of course, he does not ask that. I give him more trouble than all the other neutral Powers combined; they all say this. And, on the other side, his war-lord associates in the Cabinet make his way hard.

So it goes—God bless us, it's awful. I never get away from it—war, war, war every waking minute, and the worry of it; and I see no near end of it. I've had only one thoroughly satisfactory experience in a coon's age, and this was this: Two American ships were stopped the other day at Falmouth. I telegraphed the captains to come here to see me. I got the facts from them—all the facts. I telephoned Sir Edward that I wished to see him at once. I had him call in one of his ship-detaining committee. I put the facts on the table. I said, "By what right, or theory of right, or on what excuse, are those ships stopped? They are engaged in neutral commerce. They fly the American flag." One of them was released that night—no more questions asked. The other was allowed to go after giving bond to return a lot of kerosene which was loaded at the bottom of the ship.

If I could get facts, I could do many things. The State Department telegraphs me merely what the shipper says—a partial statement. The British Government tells me

(after infinite delay) another set of facts. The British Government says, "We're sorry, but the Prize Court must decide." Our Government wires a dissertation on International Law—Protest, protest: (I've done nothing else since the world began!) One hour with a sensible ship captain does more than a month of cross-wrangling with Government Departments.

I am trying my best, God knows, to keep the way as smooth as possible; but neither government helps me. Our Government merely sends the shipper's ex-parte statement. This Government uses the Navy's excuse. . . .

At present, I can't for the life of me see a way to peace, for the one reason I have told you. The Germans wish to whip England, to invade England. They started with their army toward England. Till that happened England didn't have an army. But I see no human power that can give the English now what they are determined to have—safety for the future—till some radical change is made in the German system so that they will no longer have a war-party any more than England has a war-party. England surely has no wish to make conquest of Germany. If Germany will show that she has no wish to make conquest of England, the war would end to-morrow.

What impresses me through it all is the backwardness of all the Old World in realizing the true aims of government and the true methods. I can't see why any man who has hope for the progress of mankind should care to live anywhere in Europe. To me it is all infinitely sad. This dreadful war is a logical outcome of their condition, their thought, their backwardness. I think I shall never care to see the continent again, which of course is committing suicide and bankruptcy. When my natural term of service is done here, I shall go home with more

## INDEX





# INDEX

- Age*, Louisville, connection with, I 32
- Aid to stranded Americans in Europe on outbreak of war, I 304, 307, 329
- Alabama* claims, the framed check for, in British Foreign Office, I 390, II 78
- Alderman, Dr. Edwin A., early efforts in behalf of public education, I 73, 78; stricken with tuberculosis, but recovers health, I 120; on committee to lecture in England, II 346.
- Letters to*: expressing fear and hope of Wilson, I 121; on meeting of the Southern and the General Education Boards, I 125; after Wilson's inauguration, I 128; while enroute to port as Ambassador, I 129; on changed world conditions, II 142
- Ambassador, some activities of an, I 159; as a preventer of calamities, I 166
- America and Great Britain, only free countries in the world, II 121
- American Government, slight regard for by British, I 145, 152, 190, II 153; strong feeling against uncourteous Notes of, II 74; on handling of *Lusitania* case, II 79; on being under German influence, II 80, 97
- American Luncheon Club, could not adhere to neutrality, II 230
- American Navy, its aid in combatting the submarine, II 294
- American supremacy, a before-the-war prophecy, I 144; why the British will acknowledge, I 170
- Ansona*, torpedoed, II 79 *note*
- Anderson, Chandler P., counsel for Committee for relief of stranded Americans, I 307; backs up Ambassador in neutrality letter to Wilson, I 373; gives reasons why unwise to demand adoption of Declaration of London, I 387
- Anglo-American-German "pact," planned by Wilson and House, I 281
- Anglomania, charged against ambassadors, I 257
- Anti-Imperialists, protest declaration of war against Spain, I 62
- Arabic*, sinking of, thought surely to bring on war, II 26
- Arbitration Treaty, renewal of, I 285; significance of Germany's refusal to sign, I 294
- Archbold, John D., attempts to explain Foraker letters, I 88
- Archibald, James, trapped by British secret service, II 101
- Asquith, H. H., opposition to the House of Lords, I 137; at state dinner to King Christian, I 167; hint to, on Mexican situation, I 185; conciliatory remarks at Guildhall banquet, I 210; explains Dardanelles preparations, I 430; his ministry suspected of pacifist or "defeatist" tendencies, I 430; aged by the war, II 141; conversation with, regarding Casement case, and relations between Great Britain and America, II 168; refuses to discuss Wilson's peace note, II 207; in House of Commons speech welcomes America as ally, II 230; inclined toward seeking peace, II 353
- Astor, Mr. and Mrs. Waldorf, at the home of, II 380
- Atlantic Monthly*, editor of, I 53
- Atlantic Ocean, a blessing to America, I 162, 170, 310; II 117
- Austrian Embassy, left in charge of American Ambassador, I 305, 321; difficulties incident to, I 345
- Aycock, Gov. Charles B., efforts in educational reform, I 85; commendatory letter from, I 86
- Babeock, Commander, arrival in England, II 274
- Bacon, Senator Augustus O., declared he would have blocked Page's Ambassadorship had he known he was author of "The Southerner," I 93, 226
- Baker, Secretary Newton D., sees the war at first-hand, II 364; dinner at Embassy to, II 364, 370; Page's memorandum of his visit, II 366
- Baker, Ray Stannard, visit at Sandwich, II 384
- Balfour, aged by the war, II 141; drafts reply to Wilson's peace note, II 212; reply to question how best America could help, II 219; on the disposition of the German colonies, II 246; friendliness toward United States averts crisis in Venezuela dispute, II 249; much concerned at feeling toward British in the United States, II 251; his home life, II 257; conference with Bonar Law and, over financial help from America, II 261; satisfactory conference with Mr. Polk over black-list and blockade, II 265; explains "secret

- treaties" to President Wilson, II 267; conference with McAdoo on financial situation, II 267; sends dispatch to President Wilson substantiating previous reports of Page and Sims on submarine peril which were not taken seriously, II 284; indignant over misunderstanding with Brazilian Navy, II 304; at the Embassy dinner to Secretary Baker, II 365, 370; at train to bid good-bye, II 402; most affected at leave-taking, 403
- Balfour Mission to the United States, II 249 *et seq.*
- Barclay, Esther, Mr. Page's maternal grandmother, I 6
- Bayard, Thomas F., accused of Anglomanie while Ambassador, I 257
- Beckendorff, Count, talk with, II 82
- Belgium, violation of, the cause of Great Britain's participation in the war, I 315; sending food supplies to aid starving, I 346
- Benham, misunderstanding over American destroyer's action during submarine operations off Nantucket, II 253
- Benton, William S., Englishman, murdered in Mexico, I 285
- Beresford, Lord Charles, complains of attitude of Foreign Office in pacifying America, I 365; makes speech in House of Lords on attitude of U. S. Destroyer *Benham*, II 253
- Bernstorff, Count von, objectionable activities of, I 335; efforts to secure intercession of the United States toward peace, I 403; at the Speyer dinner, I 404; instructed to start propaganda for "freedom of the seas," I 436; gives pledge that liners would not be submarined without warning, II 30 *note*; thought in England to dominate our State Department, II 80; cable proposing suspending of submarine war, II 149; threatens President Wilson with resumption of submarine sinkings unless he moves for peace, II 200; news of his dismissal received in London, II 215
- Bethmann-Hollweg, not seen by Colonel House, I 289; tells King of Bavaria peace must be secured, II 181
- Biddle, General, at the Embassy dinner to Secretary Baker, II 365, 370
- Bingham School, studies and environment at, I 16; selected for honour prize by Ambassador, I 17
- Blacklist, feeling in America over the, II 184; conditions change on American entry into war, II 264, 265, 266
- Blanquet, General, in Mexican uprising, I 175
- Bliss, General Tasker, wisdom and tact impress the Allies, II 351
- Blockade, British, compared to our blockade in Civil War, II 55 *et seq.*; the American Note protesting against, II 69
- Blockade, strong feeling in America against, II 184
- Bolling, Thomas, at President Wilson's luncheon, II 171
- Bones, Miss, at President Wilson's luncheon, II 171
- Boy-Ed, dismissal of, II 108
- Brazilian Navy, ships join American unit in European waters, II 304
- Breitung, E. N., makes test case with *Dacia* registry, I 393
- British Navy League, activity in keeping up the navy, I 284
- Bryan, William Jennings, uncomplimentary editorial on, in *World's Work*, I 87; attitude toward concession holders in Mexico, I 181; refuses to consider intervention in Mexico, I 193; an increasing lack of confidence in, I 193; tirade against British, to Sir William Tyrrell, I 202, to Col. House, I 206; Asquith's opinion of, 236; Page's appeal to Colonel House that he be kept out of Europe, I 235, 236; regards Ambassador as unneutral, I 362; insists that Great Britain adopt the Declaration of London, I 373, 377; interested in the Straus peace proposal, I 407; resignation after *Lusitania* notes, II 6; proposes going to England and Germany to try peace negotiations, II 12
- Bryan, comments on his political activity but diplomatic laxity, I 194, 225, 236; crank once, crank always, II 27; democratic party wrecked by his long captaincy, II 190
- Bryce, Lord, hopeless of the two countries ever understanding one another, II 39; concern at our trivial notes, II 67; conversation with, on misunderstandings between America and Great Britain, and the peace settlement, II 165; depressed at tenor of Wilson's note proposing peace, sends him personal letter, II 207; in House of Lords speech welcomes America as ally, II 230; frequent visitor at the Embassy, II 315; attitude toward a League of Nations, II 357
- Burns, John, resigns from British Cabinet on declaration of war, I 316
- Buttrick, Dr. Wallace, intimacy with, I 85; efforts in building up Southern agriculture, I 94; in hookworm eradication, I 99; lectures on the United States throughout Great Britain, II 291; his speeches a source of inspiration to British masses, II 345; asked to organize a committee of Americans to extend the work, II 345; informed by Colonel House of Wilson's disapproval, II 348; warns Page of breakdown if he does not at once return to America, II 375; beneficial effects of his lectures, III 388

- Canterbury, Archbishop of, in House of Lords speech welcomes America as ally, II 231; on gratitude shown to America, II 245
- Carden, Sir Lionel Edward Gresley, his being sent to Mexico, a British mistake, I 187; anti-American propaganda in Cuba, I 196; as British Minister to Mexico shows great hostility to the United States, I 197; formally advises Huerta to abdicate, I 209; Page's part in recall from Mexican post, I 215 *et seq.*
- Carlyle, Thomas, new letters from, discovered in Canada, I 60
- Carnegie, Andrew, visit to, at Skibo, I 142
- Carranza, Venustiano, thought by Wilson to be a patriot, I 227, 228
- Carson, Sir Edward, resists the Home Rule Bill, I 137; at Bonar Law dinner, II 119; tells Lloyd George submarines must be settled before Irish question, II 260
- Casement, Sir Roger, trial and conviction in-  
spire movement from Irish-Americans result-  
ing in Senate resolution, II 166
- Cecil, Lord Robert, incident of the "Boston Tea Party," I 392; receives German proposal from Page as "German Ambassador," II 201; letters to Sir C. Spring Rice on Germany's peace proposal, II 201, 202; Page's interview with to explain Wilson's peace communica-  
tion, II 208; at train to bid good-bye, II 402
- Chamberlain, Senator, presents petition demand-  
ing Ambassador's removal, I 259; demands Senate be furnished with copy of Panama tolls speech, I 260
- Chancery, removal of, to better quarters, I 341
- Children, crusade for education of, I 72
- China case, the, satisfactorily settled, II 154, 155
- Choate, Joseph H., understanding of Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, I 242; accused of Anglomania while Ambassador, I 257
- Christian, King, royal reception to, I 167
- Christmas in England, 1915, II 103
- Churchill, Winston, proposal for naval holiday, I 277, 278, 279, 298
- Civil War, first contact with, I 1; his father's attitude toward, I 5; early recollections of Sherman's invasion, II 10; the aftermath, I 13
- Clark, Champ, opponent of repeal of Panama Tolls Bill, I 264
- Cleveland, President, an influence in formation of ideals, I 40; conversation with, I 40
- Cotton, the question of contraband, I 267
- Country Life Commission, appointed on, by President Roosevelt, I 89
- Court, presentations at, I 156, 172
- Courtesies in diplomatic intercourse, necessity for, I 147, 190
- Cowdray, Lord, head of British oil concessions in Mexico, I 181; withdraws request for Colombian oil concession, I 217; long talk with on intervention in Mexico, I 225; great monetary loss in giving up oil concessions, I 227
- Cradock, Admiral, does not approve American policy toward Mexico, I 230
- Crewe, Marquis of, on Page's tact as Ambassador, II 397
- Criticisms and attacks on Ambassador Page; the "knee-breeches" story, I 133; Hearst papers watching for opportunity, I 149, 261; furor over "English-led and English-ruled" phrase, I 258; speech before Associated Chambers of Commerce, on Panama tolls, I 259
- Cuba, a problem, I 176
- Curzon, Lord, in House of Lords speech welcomes America as ally, II 230
- Dacia incident, the, a serious crisis averted, I 392, II 4
- Daniels, Josephus, protest made against his appointment to Secretaryship of Navy, I 119
- Dardanelles: Asquith explains preparations, I 430
- Daughters of the Confederacy, considered not helpful to Southern regeneration, I 44
- Davis, Harry L., Mayor of Cleveland, letter to, expressing regret at not being able to attend meeting for purpose of bringing England and America closer together, II 405
- Davis, Jefferson, call on, I 37
- Declaration of London, Bryan insists on adoption by Great Britain, I 373, 377; history of the articles, I 375; the solution of the difficulty, I 385
- Declaration of War, America's, and its effect in Great Britain, II 230 *et seq.*
- Delcassé, Kaiser makes proposal to, to join in producing "complete isolation" of the United States, II 192
- De Kalb, Courtney, congratulations from, I 59
- Dent, J. M., loses two sons in the war, II 111; opinion of Asquith, II 116
- Depression in England, the dark days of the war, II 64, 81, 94
- Derby, Lord, "excessive impedimenta," II 344; at the Embassy dinner to Secretary Baker, I 365, 370
- Dernburg, Bernhard, instructed to start prop-  
aganda for "freedom of the seas," I 436
- Desart, Earl of, formulates Declaration of London, I 375
- Diaz, Porfirio, authority maintained by genius and force, I 175
- Dilettanti, Society of, dinners at, II 312
- Doubleday, Frank N., joins in publishing ven-  
ture with S. S. McClure, I 64; the Harper



- experiment, I 65; has "business" visit from a politician, I 88
- Letters to*: impressions of England, I 138; anent the Christmas holidays, etc., I 164; Christmas letter, 1915, II 110; impressions of Europeans, II 132; on America's programme after declaration of war, II 224; on wartime conditions and duties, II 240; on the good showing of the Americans in war preparation, II 324; depressed at long continuation and horrors of the war, II 325
- Doubleday, Page & Co., founding of the firm, I 66; attains great influence and popularity, I 86
- Dumba, Dr. Constantin, given his passports, II 30 *note*
- Duncan, Dr., president of Randolph-Macon College, I 20
- Education: efforts in behalf of Southern child, I 72; church system declared a failure, I 78; organization of Southern Educational Conference, I 83; Southern Education Board organized, I 84; General Education Board founded by John D. Rockefeller, I 84; the South's awakening, I 85
- England, why unprepared for war, II 35; changed and chastened, II 342
- Englishwoman's letter from Berlin giving Germany's intentions toward England, America, and the world, I 347
- "English-led and English-ruled," furor over phrase, I 258
- "Excoriators," disregarded, I 80-83
- Falkenhayn, cynical toward proposals of Colonel House, I 289
- Farming, love of, and home in South, I 115, 127, 128
- Field, Eugene, succeeds to desk of, on *St. Joseph Gazette*, I 36
- Fisher, Lord, remark that Balfour was "too much of a gentleman" for First Lord of the Admiralty, II 101
- Flexner, Dr. Abraham, cites Page as greatest educational statesman, I 85
- Flexner, Dr. Simon, interested in hookworm campaign, I 100
- Foraker, Senator Joseph B., career destroyed by exposure of Archbold-Standard Oil letters, I 88
- Forbes, Cameron, fails to see President Wilson on his return from Philippines, II 174
- Ford, Henry, the venture in the peace ship, II 119 *note*
- Forgotten Man, The, address at Greensboro, I 74
- Forum, The, made of great influence and a business success, under editorship, I 49
- Fosdick, Harry Emerson, on proposed committee to lecture in England, II 346
- Fowler, Harold, in London, I 134; sent to Belgium, I 338; enlists in British Army, I 358
- France, not in favour of England reducing naval programme, I 284; a gift of a billion dollars to, proposed, II 218
- "Freedom of the seas," Colonel House's proposed reform, I 435
- French, Field Marshal Sir John, informs Page of undiplomatic methods of State Departments in peace proposals, I 425, 427; aged by the war, II 141
- Frost, W. G., writes for *Atlantic Monthly*, I 60
- Fryatt, Captain, execution of, hardens British people to fight to finish, II 182
- Garfield, President, assassination deplored throughout the South, I 39
- Gates, Dr. Frederick T., interested in hookworm campaign, I 99
- Gaunt, Captain, sends news from Washington of Bernstorff's dismissal, II 215
- General Education Board, organized by John D. Rockefeller, I 84; assists Dr. Knapp in agricultural demonstration work, I 96
- George V, received by, I 135; very likeable, I 157; overwrought condition in speaking with Page on declaration of war, I 309; much distressed at tenor of Wilson's note proposing peace, II 207; as a "human being," II 235; night spent with, II 236, 240; luncheon to General Pershing, II 237; telegram of regret at resignation of Mr. Page and ill-health that occasioned it, II 397
- German Embassy, left in charge of American Ambassador, I 306; difficulties incident to, I 306, 345, 359
- Germany: ridicules idea of naval holiday, I 279; would have been victorious in World War had she signed arbitration treaty with United States, I 294; attempts to embroil the United States and Great Britain, I 393, 400; move for peace, 1916, II 179
- Germany, travels in, in 1877, I 30
- Gildersleeve, Professor, Basil L., at Johns Hopkins University I 24, 25; Page a favourite pupil of, in Greek, II 299
- Gilman, Daniel Coit, constructive work as president of Johns Hopkins University, I 23
- Godkin, E. L., writes for *Atlantic Monthly*, I 60
- Grady, Henry, kindness of, I 34, 37
- Great Britain and the United States only free countries in the world, II 121
- Great Britain's participation in the war, the cause of, I 315
- Greek, proficiency in, I 21, 24, 25, 30; II 299
- Grey, Lord, ex-Governor-General of Canada, I 150



Grey, Sir Edward, credentials presented to, I 135; high regard for, I 150; his fairness facilitates diplomatic business, I 155; talks with on Mexican situation, I 184, 185, 188, 199; informed as to Carden's activities, I 219, 220; asked to meet Colonel House at luncheon, I 245; note to Sir C. Spring Rice on Wilson's address to Congress on Tolls Bill, I 254; criticized for "bowing too low to the Americans," I 261; depressed at extent of Anglo-phobia in the United States, I 266; evinces satisfaction at clearing up of problems, I 285; weeps as he informs Page of ultimatum to Germany, I 309, 315; "subservience" to American interests, I 364; accepts Declaration of London with modifications, I 384; joking over serious affairs, I 396; welcomes Page's solution of the *Dacia* tangle, I 394; letter to Sir Cecil Spring Rice regarding Speyer-Straus peace proposal, I 408; states war could be ended more quickly if America ceased protests against seizure of contraband, I 421; talk on detained shipping and Wordsworth poems, II 103; "a God's mercy for a man like him at his post," II 118; aged by the war, II 141; satisfactory settlement of the *China* case, II 155; speech in House of Commons on Peace, II 157; nothing but praise heard of him, II 159; memorandum of conversation with, on conditions of peace, II 166; receives Senate Resolution asking clemency for Sir Roger Casement, II 167; forced to resign, because he refused to push the blockade and risk break with America, II 283; guest with Mr. and Mrs. Page at Wilsford Manor, II 288; walk to Stonehenge with, II 292; serious blockade questions give way to talks on poets, II 305; promises government support of Belgian Relief plan, II 310; frequent visitor at the Embassy, II 315

*Letters from:* congratulations on Wilson's address to Congress advising declaration of war, II 234; expressing grief at Page's departure and citing his great help, II 400

Haldane, Viscount, at Thanksgiving Dinner of the American Society, I 213; discussion with Von Tirpitz as to relative sizes of navies, I 278; knew that Germany intended war, II 35

Hall, Admiral William Reginald, brings news of Bernstorff's dismissal, II 215

Hanning, Mrs. Robert, sister of Thomas Carlyle, I 60

Harcourt, Right Honourable Lewis, eulogizes work of International Health Board, I 101

Harden, Maximilian, says Germany must get rid of its predatory feudalism, II 193

Harper & Brothers, difficulties of, I 64

Harrow, visit to, and talk to schoolboys, I 17

Harvey, George, succeeds Page as editor of *Harper's*, I 66

Hay, John, understanding of Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, I 242; accused of Anglomania while Ambassador, I 257

Hays, Sir Bertram, captain of the *Olympic*, races ship to hasten Page's homecoming, II 404

Hearst, William Randolph, used by Germans in their peace propaganda, I 410, 411

Hearst papers, antagonism of, I 149, 256, 264, 286

*Hesperian*, submarined in violation of Bernstorff's pledges, II 30

Hewlett, Maurice, his son among the missing, II 115

Home Rule Bill, Carson threatens resistance to, I 137; "division" in House of Lords, I 138

Hookworm eradication, efforts in, I 98

Hoover, Charles L., war relief work while American Consul at Carlsbad, I 334

Hoover, Herbert C., relief work at beginning of war, I 333; selected by Page for Belgian Relief post, II 310

House, Colonel Edward M., wires Page to come North, expecting to offer Secretaryship of Interior, I 118; transmits offer of Ambassadorship, I 130; on Cowdray and Carden, I 218, 220; meets Sir Edward Grey to talk over Panama Tolls question, I 246; mission to the Kaiser a disappointment, I 289; no success in France, I 297; fancied security in England, thinks his mission unnecessary, I 298; telegrams, to and from Wilson on proffering good offices to avert war, I 317, 318; declares bill admitting foreign ships to American registry "full of lurking dangers," I 392; declares America will declare war on Germany after *Lusitania* sinking, II 2; sees "Too proud to fight" poster in London, II 6; recommends Page's appointment as Secretary of State, II 11; fails to alter Wilson's opposition to Taft Committee visiting England, I 348

*Letters from:* reporting progress in Panama Tolls matter, I 253; plans to visit Kaiser and bring about naval holiday between nations, I 277; cites further plans for visiting Germany, I 281; respecting proposed trip to Germany, I 285, 286, en route, I 288; note from Berlin, I 296; from Paris, I 297; on the outbreak of the war, I 299; transmitting Wilson's warning to adhere more strictly to neutrality, I 362; explains the toning down of demands that Declaration of London be adhered to, I 378; on German peace proposals, and giving his ideas for a settlement, I 413; proposing that Wilson start peace parleys, I 416; thinks Germany ready for peace proposals, I 424, 425; decides to visit combatants in interests

of peace, I 425, 429; talks in Berlin with Zimmermann and others regarding peace parleys, I 432, 433, 434; on appointment of Lansing to succeed Bryan, II 11; on Bryan's intentions of going to England and Germany to try peace negotiations, II 12; reporting success of Balfour Mission, II 263

*Letters to:* comparing the Civil War with the World War, I 5; on the Mexican situation, I 189; asked personally to deliver memorandum to President on intervention in Mexico, I 194; on visit of Sir William Tyrrell to the United States, I 201; letters to Page on Mexican situation, I 205, 206; on Mexican question, I 210, 211; on Lord Cowdray and oil concessions in Mexico, etc., I 216; protesting publication of secret information respecting Carden, I 223; suggesting intervention in Mexico, I 230; on serious disadvantage in not having suitable Embassy, I 233; on rashness of Bryan's visit to Europe, I 235; appeal for attention to cables and letters by State Department, I 239; on necessity of repeal of Panama Tolls Bill, I 247; on the prevention of wars, I 270; asked to further plan to have Wilson visit England, as a preventative of European war, I 275; favouring alliance of English-speaking peoples, I 282; on French protest against reduction of British naval programme, I 283; transmitting pamphlets on "federation" and disarmament, I 284; told he will have no effect on Kaiser, I 287; reply to note as to prevention of the war, I 300; describing conditions in second month of the war, I 327; on the horrors of war, and the settlement, I 340; on difficulties of Sir Edward Grey with Army and Navy officers in releasing American cargoes, I 365; on evil of insisting on Declaration of London adoption, I 380; regarding the Straus peace proposal, I 410; explaining there can be no premature peace, I 417; on harmlessness of Bryan on proposed peace visit and cranks in general, II 13; commenting on slowness of Wilson in *Lusitania* matter, II 26; on sinking of *Arabic*, II 27; not interested in "pleasing the Allies," II 28; on Dumba's intrigues, and Wilson's "watchful waiting and nothing doing," II 30, 31, 37, 38; on the lawyer-like attitude of the State Department, II 54; the best peace programme—the British and American fleets, II 69; on uncourteous notes from State Department, II 72; on British adherence to the blockade, and an English Christmas, 1915, II 103; on the conditions of peace and the German militarism, II 134, 157; on prophecy as to ending the war by dismissal of Bernstorff, II 197; on the beneficial visit of the Labour Group and others, II 387

Houston, David F., suggested to Wilson for Secretary of Agriculture, II 114; has proper perspective of European situation, II 176

*Letters to:* impressions of diplomatic life, II 151; suggesting vigorous action of Administration in prosecuting the war, II 226; on American cranks being sent to England, others prevented, II 359

Houston, Herbert S., letters to, giving impressions of England, I 139

Huerta, General Victoriano, seizes presidency of Mexico, I 175; attitude of Great Britain and the United States toward recognition; I 180; an epochal figure, I 183; rejects proposals submitted by Lind, I 193; proclaims himself dictator, I 197

Huxley, Thomas H., delivers address at opening of Johns Hopkins University, I 25

International Health Commission, endowed by John D. Rockefeller, I 100; coöperation by British Government, I 101

Irish Question, the, British difficulties with, I 159; cause of feeling against British in the United States, II 251; Wilson requests Great Britain to settle, II 255; Lloyd George striving for solution, II 259

James, Henry, frequent visitor at the Embassy, II 315

Jeanes Board, appointment to, I 89

Jellicoe, Admiral Sir John, vigilance in war time, I 335; after battle of Jutland, II 141; reply to question how best America could help, II 219; drafts dispatch explaining seriousness of submarine situation which Balfour sends to President Wilson, II 285

Johns Hopkins University, teaching on new lines, I 23

Johnston, Miss Mary, noted serial of, in *Atlantic Monthly*, I 56, 61

Judson, Harry Pratt, on proposed Committee to lecture in England, II 346

Jusserand, opinion of the Straus peace proposal, I 407

Keller, Helen, persuaded to write "Story of My Life," I 90

Kent, Mr., forms American Citizens Relief Committee in London at outbreak of war, I 304, 307

Kerr, Philip, conversation with on future relations of the United States and Great Britain, II 84

Kipling, Rudyard, loses his son in the war, II 115

Kitchener, Lord, speech in House of Lords a disappointment, II 96; criticism of, II 120;

- Memorandum after attending service in memory of, II 140
- Knapp, Dr. Seaman A., his "Demonstration Work" in Southern agriculture, I 95; his funeral, I 96
- Kropotkin, Prince Peter, writes *Memoirs for Atlantic Monthly*, I 61
- Lane, Secretary Franklin, comment on feeling against British for conduct in Huerta affair, I 198
- Lansdowne, Marquis of, letter favouring premature peace severely criticized, II 327, 353
- Lansing, Robert, regards Ambassador as unneutral, I 362; a lawyer, not a statesman, I 369; insistence that Great Britain adopt Declaration of London, I 378 *et seq*; attitude of lawyer, not statesman, II 53; arguments against British blockade, II 62; mind running on "cases", not diplomacy, II 176; answers Page's letter of resignation, transmitting President Wilson's request to reconsider and stay at his post, II 199
- Lassiter, General, encouraged on trip to the front, II 245
- Laughlin, Irwin, First Secretary of the Embassy, I 133; requested to ascertain Great Britain's attitude toward recognition of Huerta, I 180; tells Colonel House he will have no success with Kaiser, I 285; on Germany's intentions toward America, I 351 *note*; as to depressing effect of the war on Page, I 357; backs up Ambassador in neutrality letter to Wilson, I 373; gives opinion that persistence is unwise in demanding acceptance of Declaration of London, I 387; Wilson's comment to, on Page's letters, II 22; diplomatically presents to Sir Edward Grey the Senate Resolution asking clemency for Casement, II 167; letters from, on occasion of Germany's 1916 peace movement, II 180; commended to President Wilson in letter of resignation, II 394
- Law, Bonar, gives depressing news from the Balkans, II 104; dinner with, II 119; reply to question how best America could help, II 219; conference with Balfour and, over financial help from America, II 261
- Lawrence, Bishop, on proposed committee to lecture in England, II 346
- Leadership of the world, American, II 105, 110, 145, 254
- League to Enforce Peace, Page's opinion of, II 144; Sir Edward Grey in sympathy with objects of, II 163; Lord Bryce, remarks as to favourable time for setting up such a league, II 165
- Leaks in diplomatic correspondence, gravity of, I 147, 148, 151, 222, 223, 224, 235, II 7, 276
- Lichnowsky, German Ambassador at London, almost demented at breaking out of the war, I 306, 309, 315; places blame for war on Germany, I 322
- Lincoln, Abraham, monument to, erected at Westminster, I 274
- Lind, John, failure of mission to Mexico, I 193
- Literary style and good writing, advice on, II 341
- Lloyd George, his taxing of the aristocracy, I 137; landowners fear of, I 158; at state dinner to King Christian, I 167; on the necessity of reducing navy programme, I 283; holding up under strain of war, II 83; aged by the war, II 141; in House of Commons speech welcomes America as ally, II 230; has the touch of genius in making things move, II 259; working for solution of Irish question, II 259; too optimistic regarding submarine situation, II 287; his energy keeps him in power, II 354; at the Embassy dinner to Secretary Baker, II 365, 370; congratulates Mr. and Mrs. Page on American success at Cantigny, II 375; letter expressing sorrow at Mr. and Mrs. Page's departure and reviewing their good work, II 398
- Loring, Charles G., marries Miss Katharine Page, II 87; in service on western front, II 375
- Loring, Mrs. Charles G., letters to, on travelling—and staying at home, II 88; autumn, gardens, family, and war news, II 92; Christmas letter, 1915, II 117; from St. Ives, II 332, 339
- Lowell, James Russell, accused of Anglomania while Ambassador, I 257
- Lusitania, torpedoed, I 436; bulletins of the tragedy received at the dinner given in honour of Colonel and Mrs. House, II 1; distress and disillusionment of the Wilson notes, II 6
- Madero, Francisco, overthrown as president of Mexico, and assassinated, I 175
- Mayflower Pilgrims, dedication of monument to, at Southampton, I 258
- Mayo, Admiral, sent to Europe to study naval situation, II 322
- McAdoo, Secretary, conference with Balfour Mission on financial situation, II 267
- McClure, S. S., joins forces with F. N. Doubleday, I 64; the Harper experiment, I 65; anecdote of, II 303
- McCrary, Lieut.-Commander, on Committee for relief of stranded Americans, 307
- McIver, Dr. Charles D., educational statesman, I 73, 74, 78; as the character, Professor Billy Bain, in "The Southerner," I 93
- McKinley Administration endorsed on measures against Spain, by *Atlantic Monthly*, I 63
- Mary, Queen, received by, I 136
- Mensdorf, Austrian Ambassador, marooned in



- London, at outbreak of war, I 305, 309; the war a tragedy to, I 321
- Mersey, Lord, comments on the tariff, I 150; at dinner of Dilettanti Society, II 312
- Mexico, "policy and principle" in, I 175 *et seq.*; difficulties of self-government, II 177; progress due to foreign enterprise, I 178; the problem of oil concessions, I 179, 181; intervention believed by Page the only solution, I 183, 193, 194, 200, 230, 273
- Mims, Professor Edwin, letter to, on attacks of Southern theologians, I 80
- Monroe Doctrine, the Kaiser's proposal to smash it, II 192
- Moore, John Bassett, suggestion that he be put in charge of American-British affairs, I 239
- Morley, John, at state dinner to King Christian, I 167; resigns from British cabinet on declaration of war, I 316; visitor at the Embassy, II 315
- Morley, Lord, on reforms, I 141
- Morgan, J. P., account of Allies with, greatly overdrawn at time of America's entrance into war, II 272; this paid by proceeds of Liberty Loans, II 273
- Morgan, J. P. & Co., in control of Harper & Brothers, I 64
- "Mummy" theme applied to the unawakened South, I 45, 75
- Munitions, American, importance of to the Allies, I 363
- Münsterberg, Prof. Hugo, pro-German activities of, I 335
- Navy Department, ignores urgent recommendations of Admiral Sims that destroyers be sent, II 276, 284
- Negro, the, the invisible "freedom", I 12; wrong leadership after the Civil War, I 14; fails to take advantage of university education during Reconstruction, I 18
- Negro education, and industrial training advocated, I 43
- Neutrality, strictly observed, I 353, 360; the mask of, II 230
- New York *Evening Post*, connection with, I 43
- New York *World*, correspondent for, at Atlanta Exposition, I 34; on editorial staff, I 35
- Northcliffe, Lord, illness from worry, II 66; "saving the nation from its government", II 116; attitude on Wilson's peace note, II 207
- Norway, shipping destroyed by submarines, II 231
- Nicolson, Harold, the silent toast with, II 301
- Ogden, Robert C., organizes Southern Educational Conference, I 83; after twenty years of zealous service, I 126
- O'Gorman, Senator, active in Panama Tolls controversy, I 243, 283
- "O. Henry," on Page's "complimentary" rejection of manuscripts, II 303
- Oser, Sir William, Page's physician, insists on the return home, II 393
- Pacifism, work of the "peace spies," II 210
- Pact of London, binding the Allies not to make a separate peace, I 409 *note*
- Page, Allison Francis, a builder of the commonwealth, I 4; attitude toward slavery and the Civil War, I 5; ruined by the war, I 13
- Page, Allison M., falls at Belleau Wood, II 392, 406
- Page, Anderson, settles in Wake County, N. C., I 4
- Page, Arthur W., Delcassé in conversation with tells of Kaiser's proposal to join in producing "complete isolation" of the United States, II 192; called to London in hopes of influencing his father to resign and return home before too late, II 393
- Letters to:* on the motor trip to Scotland, I 142; on conditions in second month of the war, I 335; a national depression and the horrors of war, I 344; emotions after *Lusitania* sinking, II 5; on the tendency toward fads and coddling, II 10; on the future relations of the United States and Great Britain, II 34; on the vicissitudes of the "German Ambassador to Great Britain," II 90; Christmas letter, 1915, II 121; on the attitude in the United States toward Germany, II 129; on the effect of the war on future of America, and the world, II 217; never lost faith in American people, II 223; on America's entrance into the war, II 238; on grave conditions, submarine and financial, II 287; on the occasion of the Plymouth speech, and the receptions, II 317; on the Administration's lack of confidence in British Navy, Wilson's reply to Pope, etc., II 322; Christmas letter, 1917, depicting a war-weary world, II 328; on pacifists—from the President down, II 337; views on Palestine, II 350; on personal diet, and the benefit of Secretary Baker's visit, II 369; on the anti-English feeling at Washington, II 385; while resting at Sandwich, II 388
- Page, Mrs. Catherine, mother and close companion, I 7; Christmas letter to, I 8
- Page, Frank C. in London, I 134; with his father in Rowsley when news of *Arabic* sinking was received, II 26; in service with American troops, II 375; realizes his father is failing fast and insists on his returning home, II 393
- Letters to:* on building up the home farm, and the stress of war, I 353; Christmas letter, 1915, II 121



Page, Henry A., letters to, stating a government might be neutral, but no man could be, I 361; on illusions as to neutrality and the peace proposals, II 152

Page, Miss Katharine A., arrival in London, I 134; married in the chapel Royal, II 87; *see also*, Loring, Mrs. Charles G.

Page, Lewis, leaves Virginia to settle in North Carolina, I 3

Page, Logan Waller, has proper perspective of European situation, II 176

Page, Mary B., letter to, II 376

Page, Ralph W., letters to; impressions of London life, I 161; on wartime conditions, I 352; Christmas letter, 1915, II 121; on longings for fresh Southern vegetables and fruits and farm life, II 335; on style and good writing, II 340; on the big battle, etc., II 371, 372; in praise of book on American Diplomacy, II 381; on success of our Army and Navy, II 396

Page, Mrs. Ralph W., Christmas letter to, 163

Page, Robert N., letters to, impressions of social London, I 158

Page, Thomas Nelson, Colonel House confers with in regard to peace parleys, I 434

Page, Walter Hines, impressions of his early life, I; family an old one in Virginia and North Carolina, 3; maternal ancestry, 6; close sympathy between mother and son, 3, 11; birthplace, and date of birth, 9; recollections of the Civil War, 10; finds a market for peaches among Northern soldiers, 14; boyhood and early studies, 16; intense ambition, 20; Greek Fellowship at Johns Hopkins University, 24; renewed for the next year, 27; early prejudices against Yankees, 28; travels in Germany, 1877, 30; lectures on Shakespeare, 30; teacher of English at Louisville, Ky., 32; enters journalism, 32; experience with *Louisville Age*, 32; reporter on, then editor of, *Gazette*, at St. Joseph, Mo., 33; a free lance, 34; correspondent for N. Y. *World* at Atlanta Exposition, 34; on the staff of N. Y. *World*, 35; married, 37; first acquaintance with Woodrow Wilson, 37; Americanism fully developed, 40; regard for President Cleveland, 40; founds *State Chronicle* at Raleigh, 42; a breaker of images—of the South, 44; the "mummy letters," 45; instrumental in establishment of State College, Raleigh, 47; with N. Y. *Evening Post*, 48; makes the *Forum* of great influence and a business success, 49; a new type of editor, 50; editor of *Atlantis Monthly*, 53; discovers unpublished letters of Thomas Carlyle, 60; attitude toward Spanish American War, 62; the Harper experiment, 65; joins in founding Doubleday, Page & Co., 66; his policy for

the *World's Work*, 66; public activities, 72; in behalf of education, 72; his address, "The Forgotten Man," 74; his Creed of Democracy, 78; work with General Education Board, 85; independence as an editor, 87; severely criticizes John D. Archbold for Foraker bribery, 88; appointed by Roosevelt on Country Life Commission, 89; other public services, 89; author of "the Southerner" 90; activities in behalf of Southern agriculture and Hookworm eradication, 94; his interest in Wilson's candidacy and election, 102, *et seq.*; discourages efforts to have him named for Cabinet position, 113; why he was not named, 118; protests against appointment of Daniels, 119; love for farming, 127, 128; offered Ambassadorship, 130; impressions of London and the Embassy, 132, 144; impressions of Scotland, 142; handling of the Mexican situation, 183; belief in intervention in Mexico, 193, 194; complimented by President Wilson, Bryan, and Sir William Tyrrell, 208; his part in the removal of Sir Lionel Carden from Mexican post, 215; commended by Wilson, 219, 221; suggested for Secretary of Agriculture, 232, 236; why he wished to remain in London, 240; work in behalf of Panama Tolls Bill repeal, 244; assailed for certain speeches, 258, 259; opposed to including Germany in international alliance, favouring understanding between English-speaking peoples, 282; difficulties at outbreak of the war, 301 *et seq.*; asked to take over Austrian Embassy, 305, German Embassy, 306; varied duties of war time, 337; difficulties in charge of German and Austrian and Turkish embassies, 345; relief work in starving Belgium, 346; ageing under the strain and the depressing environment, 357; difficulties of maintaining neutrality, 358; warned from Washington, 362; tactful handling of the demands that Declaration of London be adopted, 370, 373; writes Colonel House that he will resign if demands are insisted on, 383; memorandum of the affair, 385; his solution of the *Dacia* puzzle, 394; attitude toward a premature peace, 417; learns through General French of the undiplomatic methods of State Department in peace proposals, 425, 427

## VOL. II

Humiliations from Washington's failure to meet the situation, 5; remarks on Bryan's resignation, 10; considered for appointment as Secretary of State, 11; his feeling toward policies of Wilson, 18; boldness of his criticism, 21; Wilson and Lansing express anxiety that he may resign, 24; describes Zeppelin attack on London, 34, 38; Christmas in England, 1915, 103; perplexed at attitude of the United

- States, 128; his impressions of Europeans, 132; summoned to Washington, 148; memorandum of his visit to Washington, 171; Impressions of President Wilson, 172; waits five weeks before obtaining interview, 183; disappointing interview at Shadow Lawn, 184; letter of resignation sent to Wilson, 189; and the reply, 199; delivers Germany's peace proposal to Lord Robert Cecil, 201; comments to Secretary of State on "insulting words" of President Wilson's peace proposal, 207; implores Wilson to leave out the "peace without victory" phrase from his speech, 213; learns of Bernsdorff's dismissal, 215; memorandum of his final judgment of Wilson's foreign policy to April 1, 1917, 222; memorandum written on April 3, the day after Wilson advised Congress to declare war, 228; on friendly footing with King George, 234; joins with Admiral Sims in trying to waken the Navy Department to seriousness of the submarine situation, 278; Page—the man, 295-320; moves for relief of Belgium, 310, and delegates Hoover, 311; Speech at Plymouth, 316; goes to St. Ives for brief rest, 332; heatedly referred to as "really an Englishman" by President Wilson, 348; memorandum on Secretary Baker's visit, 366; failing health, 374; resignation in obedience to physicians orders, 393; representatives from King, and Cabinet at train to bid good-bye, 402; rallies somewhat on arrival in America, 405; the end—at home, 406
- Page, Walter H. Jr., Christmas letter from his "granddaddy," II 124
- Page, Mrs. Walter H., arrival in London, I 134; plays part in diplomacy, I 215, 224, 226; her great help to the Ambassador, II 315; the last letter, II 395
- Palestine and Zionism, views on, II 351
- Panama Tolls, a wrong policy, I 190; Sir William Tyrrell's talk with President Wilson, I 207, 209
- Panama Tolls Bill, Wilson writes of hopes for repeal, I 222; repeal of, I 232 *et seq.*, the bill a violation of solemn treaties, I 242; the contest before Congress, I 255
- Paris, capture of city thought inevitable, I 401
- Parliament, holds commemorative sessions in honour of America's participation in the war, II 230
- Pasha, Tewfik, leaves Turkish Embassy in charge of American Ambassador, I 345
- Peace, Germany's overtures, I 389; her first peace drives, I 398; Wilson's note to warring powers, received with surprise and irritation, II 205
- "Peace without Victory" speech, of President Wilson, and its reception in Great Britain, II 212
- Peace Centennial, plans being formed for, I 236, 274
- Pershing, General, at luncheon with King George, II 237; his presence of moral benefit to French Army, II 290
- Philippines, a problem, I 176
- Pinero, Sir Arthur, reminiscences of Page at Dilettante gatherings, II 313
- Plymouth, Mayor and Council, present the freedom of the city, II 402
- Plymouth Speech, inspires confidence in American coöperation, II 316
- Polk, Frank L., invited by British Foreign Office to consultation in England, II 248; "could not be spared from his desk," II 256
- Letter from:* on wonderful success of Balfour Mission, II 263
- Letters to:* on Balfour and his Mission to the United States, II 252; on Secretary Baker's visit, II 361
- Price, Thomas R., noted professor at Randolph-Macon, I 22
- Probyn, Sir Dighton, calls at Embassy, I 339
- Raboteau, John Samuel, Mr. Page's maternal grandfather, I 6
- Randolph-Macon College, studies at, I 20
- Rawnsley, Rev. Hardwicke Drummond, a subject of conversation, I 149
- Rayleigh, Lady, political ability, II 257, 258
- Rayleigh, Lord Chancellor of Cambridge University, II 145
- Reconstruction, more agonizing than war, I 14; effects of, upon State University, I 18
- Reed, John, account of Mexican conditions influences Wilson's policy, I 228
- Religion, deepest reverence for, I 80
- Rüs, Jacob, writes for *Atlantic Monthly*, I 60
- Rockefeller, John D., organizes General Education Board, I 84; publication of Reminiscences, I 88; founds Hookworm Commission, and International Health Commission, I 100
- Roosevelt, Theodore, writes for *Atlantic Monthly*, I 60; appoints Country Life Commission, I 89
- Letter to:* introducing the Archbishop of York, II 307
- Letter from:* praising the Ambassador's services, II 401
- Root, Elihu, understanding of Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, I 242
- Rose, Dr. Wickliffe, dinner to, in London, as head of International Health Board, I 101; hookworm work, I 127
- Round Table, The, organization for study of political subjects, II 84; *Round Table*, The, organ of above, a quarterly publication, II 84, 105

- Royal Institution of Great Britain, address before, I 191
- Royce, Josiah, associate at Johns Hopkins, I 25
- Russian Collapse, effect on the Allies, II 353
- Rustum Bey, Turkish Ambassador, given passports, II 49 *note*
- St. Ives, Cornwall, seeking rest at, II 332
- St. Joseph *Gazette*, connection with, I 33, 37, succeeds to Eugene Field's desk, on I 36
- Sackville-West, Sir Lionel, handed his passports by Cleveland, II 33 *note*
- Sargent, John, frequent visitor at the Embassy, II 315
- Saw-mill units, favourable reception of, II 291
- Sayre, Mr. and Mrs., hearty reception in London, I 213, 222, 275
- Schrippenfest, celebration of, in Berlin, I 291
- Schwab, Charles M., supplying war material to Allies, I 341
- Scotland, impressions of, I 142
- Souder, Horace E., succeeded as editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, I 53
- Secret treaties, explained to President Wilson by Mr. Balfour, II 267
- Sedgwick, Ellery, recollections of Mr. Page, as editor of *Atlantic Monthly*, I 55; on the high regard in which Page was held, II 298
- Shakespeare, lectures on, I 30
- Sharp, Ambassador, his mention of peace resented by the French, I 389; at President Wilson's luncheon, II 171
- Sherman's army, cavalry troop camp at Page home, ransack, and destroy contents, I 10
- Shoecraft, Mr., receives news of Bernstorff's dismissal, II 215
- Sihler, Prof. E. G., reminiscences of Page at Johns Hopkins, I 27
- Simon, Sir John, frequent visitor at the Embassy, II 315
- Sims, Admiral, with Ambassador Page, dines with Lord Beresford, II 254; advised of terrible submarine situation, II 273, 275; arrival and welcome in England, II 274; recommendations ignored by Washington, II 276; backed up by Page in strong dispatch, II 278; praised in letter to Wilson, II 281; in command of both English and American naval forces at Queenstown, II 282; letters from, on submarine situation, II 282; in high regard with British Admiralty, II 290; at the Embassy dinner to Secretary Baker, II 365, 370
- Shaler, Millard, reports on destitution in Belgium, II 310
- Skinner, Consul-General, on Committee for relief of stranded Americans, I 307
- Slocum, Colonel, urged to hasten arrival of American troops, II 363
- Smith, C. Alphonso, an exchange professor to Germany, II 145
- Smith, Senator Hoke, "friendly deportation" of, suggested, II 17; campaign against British Blockade, II 56, 61, 63; urging embargo on shipments to Allies, II 211
- South, the, efforts in behalf of, I 38, 43, 74; three "ghosts" which prevent progress, I 91
- Southampton speech, press comments on, 141
- Southern Education Board, active work with, I 84
- Southern Educational Conference, organization of, I 83
- "Southerner, The," only effort at novel writing, I 90
- Spanish-American War, attitude toward, I 62
- Speyer, James, connected with German peace move, I 403
- Spring Rice, Sir Cecil, notifies Washington of British change of attitude toward recognition of Huerta, I 181; confidentially consulted by Col. House regarding demands that Declaration of London be adopted, I 379; notifies Washington that *Dacia* would be seized, I 393; opinion of Straus peace proposal, I 407; letters from Lord Robert Cecil on Germany's peace proposal, II 201, 202
- Squier, Colonel, American military attaché in London at outbreak of the war, I 301
- Standard Oil Co., editorial against, in Archbold-Foraker scandal, I 88
- State *Chronicle*, connection with, I 42; editorially a success, I 48
- State College, Raleigh, N. C., instrumental in establishment of, I 47, 48
- State Department, leaks of diplomatic correspondence through, I 147, 148, 151, 223, 224
- State Dept., ignores official correspondence, I 94, 213, 219, 224, 225, 232, 238, 239, II 7, 55, 217, 253; not properly organized and conducted, II 8; trivial demands and protests, II 54, 68; uncourteous form of Notes, I 72
- Stiles, Dr. Charles W., discovers hookworm, I 98; work in combatting, I 127
- Stone, Senator William J., spokesman of pro-German cause, I 380
- Stovall, Pleasant A., Colonel House confers with, regarding peace parleys, I 434
- Straus, Oscar S., used as a tool in German peace propaganda, I 389, 403 *et seq.*
- Submarine sinkings, Germany threatens to resume, unless Wilson moves for peace, II 200; German military chieftains at Pless conference decide to resume unrestricted warfare, II 212; the most serious problem at time of American entry into war, II 273, 275, *et seq.*
- Sulgrave Manor, ancestral home of the Washingtons, restoration and preservation, I 274;



- plan to have President Wilson at dedication of, I 274, 275, II 248
- Sussex "pledge", a peace move of Germany, II 150
- Taft, William H., fails in having Carden removed from Cuba, I 196, 215, 219; accepts British invitation to head delegation explaining America's purposes in the war, II 346; Wilson's strong disapproval interferes with the project, II 347
- Tariff Commission, travelling with, for N. Y. *World*, I 35
- Teaching democracy to the British Government, I 187, 211
- Tennessee, sent to England on outbreak of war with gold for relief of stranded Americans, I 307
- Thayer, William Roscoe, disappointed in policy of the *World's Work*, I 66; letter to, in explanation, I 67
- Tillett, Wilbur Fisk, friend at Randolph-Macon College, I 20
- Towers, Lieutenant, shown remnant of torpedo from *Hesperian*, II 40
- Trinity College, studies at, I 19
- Turkish Embassy left in charge of American Ambassador, I 346
- Tyrell, Sir William, significance of his visit to the United States, I 201; unsatisfactory consultation with Bryan, I 202; explains to President Wilson the British policy toward Mexico, I 204, 207; conversation with Colonel House, I 206; Colonel House informs him of plan to visit Kaiser in behalf of naval holiday plan, I 277; advises House not to stop in England on way to Germany, I 289; expresses relief on withdrawal of demands that Declaration of London be adopted, I 387; comment on Dumba's dismissal, and Bernstorff, II 101
- Underwood Tariff Bill, impressions of in Great Britain, 150, 172
- Van Hise, on proposed committee to lecture in England, II 346
- Vanderlip, Frank A., at the Speyer "peace dinner", I 404
- Villa, Pancho, thought by Wilson to be a patriot, I 227, 228
- Vincent, George, on proposed committee to lecture in England, II 346
- Von Jagow, offers no encouragement to Colonel House's proposals, I 289
- Von Papen, dismissal of, II 108
- Von Tirpitz, discussion with Viscount Haldane as to relative sizes of navies, I 278; hostile to Colonel House's proposals, I 289
- Waechter, Sir Max, efforts for "federation" and disarmament, I 284
- "Waging neutrality", policy of, I 362
- Wallace, Henry, letters to: on Wilson's candidacy, I 105; on backing up new Secretary of Agriculture, etc., I 115
- Wallace, Hugh C., accompanies Colonel House to Europe, I 233; joins "assemblage of immortals" at Embassy, II 315
- Walsh, Sir Arthur, Master of the Ceremonies, I 135; at train to bid good-bye, II 402
- Walsh, Senator Thomas anti-English attitude, II 61
- War, American efforts to prevent the, I 270 *et seq.*
- War, memorandum at outbreak of the, I 301
- Washington, Booker T., writes for *Atlantic Monthly*, I 60; induced to write "Up From Slavery", I 90
- Wantauga Club, activities of the, I 47; crusade for education of Southern child, 73
- Wheeler, Benjamin Ide, gives Colonel House information of conditions in Germany, I 281
- White, Henry, understanding of Hay-Pauncefote Treaty, I 242
- White, William Allen, writes for *Atlantic Monthly*, I 60
- Whitlock, Brand, eulogized, I 334
- Willard, Joseph E., Colonel House confers with, in regard to peace parleys, I 434
- Williams, Senator John Sharp, demonstrates blockade against Germany not an injury to cotton-producing states, II 63
- Wilhelm II, nullifies Hague Conferences, I 280; Colonel House disappointed in mission to, I 289; derides American arbitration treaty, I 294; Colonel House's impressions of, I 295; asks President Wilson to transmit peace offer to Great Britain, I 426; makes proposal to Deleassé to join in producing "complete isolation" of the United States, II 192
- Wilson, Miss Wilia Alice, married to Page, I 37
- Wilson, Dr. William, father of Mrs. Page, I 37
- Wilson, Sir Henry, succeeds Sir William Robertson as Chief of Imperial General Staff, II 354 *note*
- Wilson, Woodrow, first acquaintance with, I 37; writes for *Atlantic Monthly*, I 60; Page greatly interested in his candidacy and election, I 102, *et seq.*; Colonel House introduced to, I 107; memorandum of interview with, soon after election, I 110; offers Ambassadorship, I 180; attitude toward recognition of Huerta, I 180; formulates new principle for dealing with Latin American republics, I 182; refuses to consider intervention in Mexico, I 190; suggestion that he officially visit Sulgrave Manor, the ancestral home of the Washing-



tons, I 195; explains attitude on Panama Toll question to Sir William Tyrrell, I 207; expresses gratification in way Page has handled Mexican situation, I 208; letter giving credit for Carden's recall from Mexico, and for constructive work, I 221; addresses Congress asking repeal of Panama Tolls Bill, I 253; plan to visit England on occasion of restoration of Sulgrave Manor, I 274, 275, II 248; requested by resolution of the Senate to proffer his good offices for mediation between Austria and Serbia, I 317; telegrams to and from Colonel House on proffering good offices to avert war, I 317, 318; message to King George proffering good offices to avert war, I 320; neutrality letter to the Senate, I 360; desires to start peace parleys, I 416; insists on pressing the issue, I 423; the "Too proud to fight" speech derided and denounced in England, II 6; the *Lusitania* notes, II 6; Page's feeling toward policies of, II 8; appreciation of Page letters, II 22; peace activities after *Sussex* "pledge", II 148; his reply to the German note concerning the submarine cessation, II 150, 156; reluctant to speak on foreign matters with his ambassadors, II 171, 172; lived too much alone, no social touch, II 173; addresses Congress on threatened railroad strike, II 172; refuses to send high ranking officers as military attachés, II 177; interview with Ambassador Page at Shadow Lawn, II 185; sends peace communication to all the warring Powers, II 204; reception in Great Britain of the "Peace without Victory" speech, II 212; answer to the Pope's peace proposal, II 321, 323; coldness toward the Allies, II 345; his strong disapproval of closer relations with Great Britain, prevents visit of Taft and noted committee, II 346

*Letters from:* on "mistaken" opinion of British critics of Carranza and Villa, I 227, 228; expressing gratitude and regard of and hopes for repeal of Toll Bill, I 254; regarding the criticized speeches, I 262, 265; reply to proposal to visit England, I 276; acceptance of Page's resignation, II 396

*Letters to:* congratulations and suggestions on Election Day, I 108; as to best man for Secretary of Agriculture, I 114; impressions of the British people, I 144; on royal reception to King Christian of Denmark, I 167; on the Mexican situation, I 184, 185, 188; memorandum sent through Colonel House on intervention in Mexico, I 194; on feeling in England toward Panama Tolls question, I

248; recapitulating events bringing the two countries more in unity, I 251; explanation of speech before Associated Chambers of Commerce, I 260, 263; suggests speech attacking Anglophobia, I 264; on the outbreak of war, I 303; on German atrocities, I 325; on agreement of nations not to make peace separately, etc., I 328; attempts to enlighten on the real nature of the war, I 370; "Rough notes toward an explanation of the British feeling toward the United States," I 373; on liability of Paris being captured and German peace drive being launched, I 401; on feeling of English toward American inaction after *Lusitania* notes, II 40, 41, 43, 44, 45; told that if he broke diplomatic relations with Germany he would end the war, II 51; on the military situation, fall of 1915, and the loss of American prestige, II 94; while waiting for interview sends notes of conversations with Lord Grey and Lord Bryce, II 183; letter of resignation—with some great truths, II 190; regarding success of Balfour Mission, etc., II 256; on financial situation among the Allies and the necessity of American assistance, II 269; on seriousness of submarine situation, II 280, 283, 286; on slow progress of war and comments on Lord Lansdowne's peace letter, II 327; on British opinion on subject of League of Nations, II 355; on the cheering effect of his war speeches and letters, II 385; the resignation in obedience to physician's orders, II 393

Wilson Doctrine, the, I 217

Wood, Gen. Leonard, methods in Cuba an object lesson, I 177

*World's Work*, founding of, I 66

Worth, Nicholas, nom de plume in writing "The Southerner", I 90

York, Archbishop of, letter commending him to Roosevelt, II 401

Zeppelin attack on London, II 34, 38

Zionism, view of, II 350

Zimmermann, German under Foreign Secretary in communication with Colonel House regarding peace proposals to Great Britain, I 426; talk with House on peace terms, I 432

Zimmermann, says Germany must apply for armistice, II 182

Zimmermann-Mexico telegram influence on the United States declaration of war, II 214





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